Shoestring Survivalism

How to Prepare for Bad Times on a Budget

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Shoestring Survivalism is dedicated to those who are willing to do what it takes to care for themselves and others in crisis.

DISCLAIMER

The information in this book about emergency preparedness and response is based on the experience, research, and beliefs of the author and cannot be duplicated exactly by readers. The contents of this book is not intended to replace professional legal, medical, or disaster-relief guidance. In all cases, it is recommended that readers seek the advice and care of professionals if available. Neither the author nor the publisher assume any responsibility for the use or misuse of information contained herein. This book is intended *for academic study only.*

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PREFACE

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."
—Theodore Roosevelt

The gruff, burly survival instructor sporting a Ranger tab didn't grimace at the cold. He stood on a porch-like platform before us, wearing a strange combination of NATO and U.S. Army regulation cold weather gear. His dedication to cold weather and mountain survival is what placed him before us, and he commanded our full attention, as our lives would be in his hands for the next few days. It was the mid-1980s, and I was attending a U.S. Army survival course on Mt. Rainier in Washington state. The experience helped me develop my notion of shoestring survivalism.

Like any good teacher, our instructor decided to gauge us before he began his class. He might have simply asked questions about levels of training and experience, but he'd have to wade through the usual bull. Instead, he examined our boots.

For you to understand his comments, I need to introduce a handy item. 550 (pronounced "five-fifty") cord is parachute cord. It's the "strings" you

see beneath the canopy that run to the straps that suspend a parachutist. It is made of a core of several nylon yarns within a sheath of woven nylon. Just 1/8-inch thick, one strand can support more than a man's weight. The cord now comes in many different colors, and there's "real" and "commercial" versions available, but the point is that it's strong, durable, and has many uses. Incredibly, the material is inexpensive—it costs pennies a foot, and often it's free.

"I see that some of you use 550 cord as boot laces," he said. "You people know that you can take 550 cord apart to make nets and fishing lines, fire starter, shelters, or whatever you need. I recommend the rest of you get some when you get back, *but it's too late now for those without it.* The same goes for other items you either brought or neglected to bring. Survival is come as you are. Some of you may have known about 550 cord laces but didn't want to violate AR 670-1 [Army regulations concerning uniforms]. Some of you might assume that the United States Army will provide all the materials necessary to complete your training, so you didn't bother.

"This is a class on *survival*. Accepting artificial limitations can get you dead. Most of you thought the packing list was where preparing ended and just left it at that, and that *can get you dead.* Some of you thought you will be able to hack it because this course is only for a few days, and that *can get you dead.* Some of you don't care, and that *can get you dead.*"

He grinned, examining us. "I can teach any and all of you some things, but the individuals who are already willing to do what it takes are ready now."

Before I attended that survival course, I'd replaced my Army-issue boot laces with 550 cord. I'd also shoved an additional 50 feet of cord in my cargo pants pocket because I always wondered what the heck people who made nets, fishing line, and shelter out of their laces used to tie their boots once they commenced surviving. Most importantly, I knew the difference between merely complying with a packing list and actually having the right gear with me for the circumstances.

I was ready, and 550 cord cost me nothing.

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Doing things "on a shoestring" in the past meant to do them inexpensively. Shoestring survivalism is about preparing for bad times by using what you already have and acquiring everything else you need inexpensively. It is about keeping your preparedness low-cost (and low-key) while getting as much utility as you can out of any item. It takes some effort to prepare for bad times, but it doesn't have to take a lot of money.

The concepts in this book were inspired by many sources, including classic survivalist strategies, military techniques, the practices of the urban and rural poor, state and federal agency policies, and observations of single moms, the homeless, and even prison inmates. To survive and thrive, you need to get the information and accept lessons learned from wherever you can and apply them to your own lives.

And you can start right now.

Chapter 1
WHY PREPARE?

We've seen the flooded streets in New Orleans, burned-down neighborhoods in California, houses reduced to toothpicks in Florida and Mississippi, and the satellite images of the tsunami damage in Indonesia. Footage of the aftermath of war and civil unrest periodically fills our TV screens and streams across our computer monitors. We've seen the resulting desperate, hungry masses, not just in Third World nations but in our own country, in our own time. In the 21st century, the media used an ugly term to refer to tens of thousands of Americans made homeless and fleeing from Hurricane Katrina's aftermath.

They called them refugees.

People might argue that the precise and politically correct definition of "refugees" does not fit, and they might talk about international borders and political, ideological, cultural, and religious differences being included in the correct definition.

But the images of ragged, shocked masses driven by events and seeking refuge elsewhere came through.

Refugees.

Stricken. Desperate. Hopeless. The observers, reporters, and experts used the grim vocabulary of tragedy regarding our own countrymen. Horrified, we saw people packed into shelters and wandering aimlessly amid their own debris and waste, and later we saw them scattered about the country, families separated, tens of thousands of our fellow Americans hurting.

While our individual reactions to the aftermath of Katrina varied, one thought came home to many of us—while we might not be able to avoid disasters, we don't ever want to be them. We don't want to be refugees, or evacuees, or displaced persons. Whatever the appropriate term is, the lesson is clear: we don't want to be victims.

And we can do this by engaging in survivalism.

WHY SURVIVALISM?

Survivalism is about having the right gear and enough supplies at the right time so that you and your family are self-sufficient during any crisis. It is about gaining awareness, resources, and knowledge before the event takes place. In a nutshell, it entails putting aside food, equipment, clothing, and other supplies in advance of an emergency and knowing what to do when things fall apart and in the aftermath, until life returns to what is called "the new normal."

I actually prefer the term "preparedness" and find it more accurate than survivalism. Survivalism suggests more of a crisis focus, whereas preparedness is about being ready not only before the disaster but continually and in a broader sense. Preparedness is survivalism, but it includes working toward a future where bad things might not happen, during which time bills must be paid and life lived and enjoyed as usual. The terms are often used interchangeably, but in general, we engage in preparedness and our mind-set is one of survivalism.

What is the survivalist's mind-set? It is this:

1. I am responsible for taking care of my family and myself in crisis.
2. I understand bad things can and do happen.

3. I will create and preserve my options to counter or mitigate the bad things.
4. I will prepare within my understanding, capabilities, and resources.
5. I know that preparations never end.

WHY BUDGET SURVIVALISM?

Too many folks believe that preparedness involves amassing large, expensive quantities of supplies, so they feel they can't prepare for tough times due to the costs involved. Others don't prepare because they consider disasters unlikely and believe resourcing for something that might not happen is a waste of time and money. They might think that Uncle Sam—*Uncle Sugar*—will always provide what is necessary when one is in need. Uncle Sam does deliver, but unfortunately, Mother Nature delivers too, and unlike Uncle, Mother has an unlimited budget . . . and ignoring that hard fact "can get you dead."

To all of these people, I counter that not preparing for hard times is unacceptable and dangerous, and much of preparedness involves little or no money and extends far beyond stockpiling. We don't put our seat belt on with an anticipation of being in an accident; we do so because the cost-to-benefits ratio makes it logical. It is a little action, perhaps resulting in some discomfort, as opposed to being more horribly injured or possibly killed in the unlikely event of a car accident. Putting a seat belt on costs nothing. It's a form of preparedness, and many preparedness steps that will be discussed in this book cost nothing as well.

The most important aspect of shoestring survivalism is to do things intelligently and efficiently. Successful preparedness is realistic. It isn't about equating a backup generator to television, or trading our weekly latte for bags of rice and beans. Just as we don't want to suffer in disaster, we also want to enjoy our lives now. Shoestring survivalism allows us to achieve both of these goals.

It might seem like a daunting task to get started. Paying for rent or mortgage, the kids' college funds, medical bills, car payments, food, power, water, pizza, beer, widescreen TVs, game systems, taxes, Roth IRAs, and dozens of other things compete with buying supplies and equipment for something we pray

isn't going to happen and might never happen. But if you stop to consider that college, retirement accounts, and medical, home, and car insurance are forms of preparedness, you realize that many real needs are already covered by your existing household budget. The rest of your time and spare income can go toward filling the gaps.

Only a few can dedicate a large percentage of their incomes to preparedness, and that's understandable. Some people might be struggling just to get by day after day, but they can prepare as well. No matter what your circumstances, you can start preparing for self-sufficiency by setting aside just a few dollars a month. This book is all about helping you spend those dollars in a balanced, realistic manner.

Chapter 2
What Are We Preparing For?

If you scroll back in your memory, you might be surprised, as I was, to remember the disasters you've experienced in your life. I've lived in many places as a child and while in the military, and I've had the mixed blessing of being on the fringe of events—close enough to see and feel the impact, never so close as to get badly hurt, and always having what we needed during the aftermath.

Thus far I've experienced hurricanes in two different states, once under terrible circumstances, enduring pouring rain without adequate shelter and stuck in flowing water for many hours through the night. I spent another hellish night in a field during a windstorm in Northern Europe that killed many. I've been through an earthquake, tornado, blizzards, and ice storms, including one that crippled an area for weeks and caused more brown and blackouts than I can remember. If you can't recall a bad situation in your life, either you're unusually fortunate, or you might be living in the right places

or are already doing something right. More likely, if you're at least middle-aged, you've seen much happen and just forgot or tried to forget about it.

Potential threats that inspire survivalists to prepare—including the loss of essential services and mass hysteria that result from these threats—are many:

- Earthquake
- Hurricane
- Tornado
- Volcano
- Tsunami/seiche
- Windstorm
- Blizzard
- Ice storm
- Avalanche
- Landslide
- Heavy rain/sleet/hail
- Floods/levee/dam failure
- Wild or urban fire
- Solar flare activity
- Widespread crime
- Civil unrest/rioting
- War
- Nuclear war
- Terrorism
- Chemical spills
- Epidemic
- Pandemic
- Food shortage/famine
- Nuclear accident
- Power outages
- Widespread unemployment
- Job actions/strikes
- Transportation isolation

Wow! Those are huge, devastating, seemingly overwhelming threats, and there are so many of them. And nearly every place in the country faces multiple threats on this list. This isn't panic talk or paranoia; it is a realistic grasp of possibilities.

A book could be written about specific concerns and countermeasures for each threat, but we'll discuss a simpler and better approach—realizing the *impact* such events have on our safety, security, and resources and countering them with plans and preparations.

Rather than get caught up in worrying about which threats are probable or remote, or which are recoverable or insurmountable, the focus must be on which *impacts are addressable.* For example, it doesn't make a difference if your food source is cut off temporarily because of fuel shortages, earthquake damage to distribution centers, panic buying, or the effects of a hurricane, ice storm, or tornado—your existing cache works no matter what the reason. You might be facing a lack of emergency services, a lack of power, of water, of shelter, of order. No matter what the cause of the shortage, the shortage must be addressed, and this is where one can focus.

The point is that it doesn't matter what the crisis is; what matters is the specific impacts the crisis has on your life. And preparedness is the response to predictable impacts.

THE IMPACTS

To best address preparedness, the focus shifts from the wide range of threats to the much narrower field of impacts. The impacts of man-made and natural disasters overlap in most cases and vary in degrees of concern, but they can be identified, and many can be managed or addressed through planning, site selection, and resources.

The impacts include:

Loss of safety. Includes such immediate impacts as flooding, radiation, chemical spills, fire, epidemic, or structural damage.

Loss of shelter. Many man-made and natural disasters destroy homes or render them uninhabitable. Other situations require evacuations. A loss of shelter might include being exposed to the elements, or it might include life-threatening temperatures for vulnerable adults and children, such as a power outage during a heat wave.

Loss of power. A frequent problem, short-term losses of power

can be addressed easily with readily available supplies and a temporarily altered lifestyle. However, long-term loss of power can cause serious problems for everyone, and if anyone in your group is dependent upon life-sustaining electrical equipment, loss of power becomes the most significant impact.

Loss of water. Will cause problems with having enough drinkable water, maintaining hygiene, and fighting fires, especially during periods of high temperatures.

Loss of food sources. An obvious problem, food shortages could occur at any step from farm to consumer. In addition to shortages, contamination could become an issue in the case of nuclear, biological, or chemical threats.

Loss of transportation. Sudden isolation due to the loss of road access might cause other impacts to take place, such as loss of emergency services or access to food, water, and other resources.

Loss of communications. Many forms of communications are dependent upon electricity. A loss of communications complicates problems and impedes speedy recovery.

Loss of emergency and medical services. Paramedic and fire services will be unable to cope with the many problems associated with disasters and other threats to public order.

Loss of order. Rioting, looting, violent crime, and arson are all potential threats that arise when law-enforcement assets are overwhelmed or, more accurately, criminals realize its limitations during a crisis.

Loss of stability. The trauma and uncertainty generated by disasters and hard times are very real impacts that must be recognized and managed.

The key to budget preparedness is this: rather than become overwhelmed by the huge range of possible threats, we become aware that the manageable impacts are similar for a variety of threats, putting our ability to avoid or mitigate the resulting shortages within our grasp. By merely realizing that each situation is mostly about the loss of something, we realize that the loss can be addressed through planning and resourcing.

The right mind-set is key here. Yes, I'm sure that some of us have plans to survive planet-killing meteors and polar shift, and

it's this level of optimism, this will to survive, that drives us. A proper mind-set will enable us to make it through almost anything.

Now that we've addressed the impacts, we need to determine our level of vulnerability and how to decrease it.

Chapter 3

Site Threat Awareness Response

Few areas are devoid of threats, and almost all of us live in areas with multiple threats. Often, the same features that threaten us are the reasons we live in the area! You might like to ski, so you live in the mountains, which puts you in harm's way during blizzards, ice storms, and avalanches. An ocean view, life amid a splendid forest, and quick and easy access to the culture of an urban center all bring their own dangers. The reality is that threats exist, so we find ways to avoid or lessen their impacts.

In facility security (i.e., for military bases, embassies, vital industries, etc.), there is a practice called a "site threat assessment" that involves having security experts analyze various threats to a site and come up with responses and solutions to each. We do the same thing in survivalism, but a better term for our purposes is "site threat awareness response." "Site threat awareness" denotes our understanding that potential or actual problems exist

in the areas in which we live, work, and play; "response" is the preparedness that results from this understanding.

Site threat awareness response can be simple. If you know you live in an area that is prone to flooding (site threat awareness), don't live in the flood plain (response). Problem solved. If you must live in the flood plain, select a location on the high ground, or at least on a higher floor of an apartment building, or arrange your two-story home in such a way to mitigate water damage to vital and valuable possessions by putting them in the second-floor rooms. If your property is damaged more than once, don't rebuild—move.

Site threat awareness can be the easy part of the preparedness equation, as it's not too difficult to know the dangers you face if you live, say, on top of the San Andreas Fault or 10 miles from a nuclear power facility. It's the response—the action part of the equation—that requires our greatest efforts. If you already live in an area with severe threats, you will need to take every step possible to lessen impact, including establishing, in advance, a place to retreat to that's outside of the danger zone.

Again using flooding as an example, let's look at the response steps you could take to mitigate the impact of rising water and related damage to your house as well as provide for the safety of you and your loved ones.

- Determine if your area is prone to flooding. You can find this information at city hall, the county seat, or the appropriate website for each.
- Develop a priority list of tasks to accomplish before, during, and after a flood.
- Set aside money for emergency lodging if need be, or make other arrangements for lodging with friends and relatives in other areas should you be forced out of your home.
- Move vulnerable family members to safer places before the flood.
- Move vehicles to a safer location before the flood.
- Establish a visual water-level mark to trigger your responses. (For example, the parents of a friend of mine experience severe flooding in their area—to the point where their porch becomes a dock! But they know that if

a certain street becomes flooded, they need to start implementing their flood-response plans.)
- Pay attention to the news and weather on a daily basis.
- Store important documents, medications, and photos in waterproof containers. Put these containers in tethered five-gallon buckets with waterproof lids.
- Put as much of what you will need in an emergency in the attic in advance. (Make sure you don't get trapped in your attic.)
- Secure a boat, canoe, or sturdy raft along with life vests for every member of the family. (Active floodwater is no place to be screwing around even if you are an expert boatman, but light vessels can be used for evacuation, rescue, and transportation once the water has become slow moving and predictable.)
- Wrap such items as furniture, clothing, books, appliances, and anything you wish to save in plastic sheeting or bag them. Damage to your home might open it to the weather.
- Stack furniture and boxes of items so that some might be saved by being above the water.
- Unhook your computer, TV, and other valuable electronic items and move them to a high point. (If possible, keep them upstairs to begin with.)

By taking measures incrementally—not immediately before the crisis but on a daily basis months or years before one strikes—you have a better chance of reducing your risk. If there is no time, there is no time, but that doesn't mean you should sit around helplessly on that rainy night, listening to the radio and watching the water rise. Get busy and do what you can.

Site threat awareness response can and should be combined with shoestring survivalism. Let's look at the common practice to board up windows to limit damage from hurricanes. Each year, those in the afflicted areas rush out and buy plywood at inflated prices before the storm, and some buy more after the storm to repair damage. Then they throw away the relatively new plywood weeks or months later. Buying plywood in advance, before the prices rise, sheet by sheet if that's all your budget will permit, and scavenging discarded plywood for use

later, is more economical and ensures you don't have to scramble for plywood when (surprise) another hurricane comes your way the next year or years later. Another option would be to simply build working shutters, which would not only add permanent protection against inclement weather but provide an additional level of physical security as well.

For most of us, site threat awareness is about accepting the risk of catastrophe balanced by its low probability. But survivalists ready their responses. Those living in earthquake-prone areas, for example, know that the odds of a truly major temblor are statistically low (they're getting higher, but they're still low compared to the odds of experiencing several quakes of lesser magnitude). Yet they will take such inexpensive and easy steps as safeguarding crucial papers; stashing tarps, nail guns, staple guns, and boards to cover damage from a quake; and learning enough about their home utility systems to be able to shut off the electricity or gas in an emergency . . . if they are prudent

People living in a trailer in Tornado Alley face a similar situation. It's not that trailer parks are the tornado magnets they are reputed to be; it's that their relative light weight makes them vulnerable to the destructive winds. Even under such circumstances, don't give up. Find the safest locations in the vicinity and between home and work that you could retreat to in the face of an oncoming funnel cloud. Set up a communications and meeting plan for your family. Do whatever can be done in the face of the threat and its impacts.

Sometimes a proper site threat awareness response is simply to move. Economically, a move might be out of the question, and such a seemingly tidy solution is not without its pitfalls. Fleeing one danger, some people blunder directly into others. Because of fear of earthquakes, many Californians move north to Washington, little knowing that Washington has them, too. They also don't realize that they will face equally dangerous threats in their new location, like destructive mudflows (called "lahars") and fast-moving currents of hot gas and rock (called "pyroclastic flows") from volcanic activity. Do your homework before taking as drastic a step as uprooting you and your family to another part of the country.

Threats we've not seen in recent history still exist in some places, representing another type of hidden danger. Today, tens of thousands of people live in valleys that run down the slopes of Mt. Rainier to Puget Sound. These people are all vulnerable to

a lahar. Caused by volcanic activity, a lahar is a devastating mass of water from melted glaciers mixed with ash, mud, and trees that sweeps down from a mountainside, engulfing and crushing everything in its path. Two cities, Auburn and Puyallup, rest on past lahars. Lahars have killed tens of thousands in recent history, but not there . . . so far. For some odd reason, people assume that the huge lahars that killed 20,000+ in South America couldn't happen in the United States, perhaps because we're not Third Worlders. Americans can develop a shocking naivety about such things, believing that our sturdy suburban homes are somehow insulated from nature, but Nature is powerful and isn't impressed by building codes. Again, the probability of a major lahar wiping these cities off the map is low, but it's not nonexistent. We'd best overcome such blindness, as Katrina taught us that the Third World can be a day away.

To me, posted evacuation routes or snail mail flyers telling me where to flee in the event of a disaster (called "bailing mailings") are not helpful instructions how to reach safety—they are warnings not to live in the area in the first place! However, if I did live there, I'd be certain to have a bug-out bag and full tank of gas at all times, keep a radio playing continually during times of high threat (e.g., hot, dry periods in a wildfire zone), and not only know the evacuation routes but also practice them.

Site threat awareness response goes beyond natural disasters. The people living in the Puyallup Valley, for example, experience a much lower level of violent crime than those in the neighboring cities of Tacoma and Lakewood, so for generations, the people in the valley have selected the right place to live. Yet some people living in those high-crime places might be terrified of the notion of living, day in and day out, with the threat of a volcanic eruption or crushing mudslide.

If you're smug about stockpiling bulk wheat and farina in the basement, but your wife is frightened going from the park-and-ride to the bus every day, her site threat awareness might be spot on while yours is quite a bit off. If you have a nifty five-kilowatt generator out back but your children sleep on the floor during the summer because of stray shots from drive-by shootings, your site threat awareness isn't resulting in appropriate response actions. Understand the true threats you face in the area you choose to live, and respond appropriately.

Critical to site threat awareness response is the condition of the people you wish to protect. While healthy individuals with normal mobility might gauge threats one way, the site threat awareness response for those with any mobility or medical problems must be different. A wheelchair-bound individual has difficulty simply moving around under normal conditions. During times of flooding or wildfire, or simply if there's debris in the street, they will be severely hampered, and you could lose someone who otherwise might make it if only he could get up a flight of stairs or down the street or to higher ground. Similarly, it would be ideal to have a month's worth of medication on hand at all times for someone with special medical needs, but it's not practical because of the expense, expiration dates, and for legal reasons.

This makes site threat awareness especially critical. Consider your "weakest link" when setting the standard and, if necessary, do whatever you can to select a better site, harden where you live, or acquire the right supplies to accommodate that person's condition. Having the gear and know-how to go Jeremiah Johnson yourself isn't doing much for your overall preparations when you know you'll never abandon your young children and ill father, so a folding wheelchair for grandpa might be a more important purchase than that neat GPS in its custom pouch.

Other times you might acquire something inexpensively, just in case, and find that you can use it in other ways—but it'll be available when needed. Aunt Jenny might be walking well enough now, but that cane at the garage sale ran a few quarters, and perhaps she should take it anyway on her walks to fend off that bothersome dog down the street . . . it'll be on hand if her hip happens to bother her when more movement is required during a future crisis . . . or else it's just 50 cents spent.

THE SHORT COURSE: SITE THREAT AWARENESS RESPONSE

So, we've established that almost every location has natural and man-made threats, whether immediate and certain or remote and unlikely. While we can't totally ensure our safety, we can determine the primary threats in our area and attempt to mitigate the full extent of their effects. But some places are just plain bad. With that in mind, here is the "short course" on site threat awareness response.

1. Don't live below sea level unless you're Dutch and your address is in Holland. Those waves pleasantly lapping at your front yard each day will just as melodiously lap at your eaves during a disaster.
2. Don't live in a single-wide or double-wide anything in Tornado Alley. (Variation: in tornado-prone areas, don't live in anything that has wheels unless it also has a working engine and is mobile.)
3. If the police can't control the crime in an area in normal times, they certainly won't be able to do so in a crisis. (Variation: The punks who break your car windows now will kick in your front door then.)
4. If anyone living in your immediate vicinity can relate personal local experiences with a devastating flood, wildfire, or other natural calamity, get new neighbors.
5. Live 20 feet above the highest watermarks on the oldest buildings . . . preferably in a different town set on higher ground.
6. If it's a pleasant, gentle walk from the river or ocean to your house, move to where it's either a rough hike uphill or a long, steep drive.
7. If the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) doesn't let you clear the brush around your house because of some damn mouse, then it's either live with the mice, burn with the mice, or move, because the EPA doesn't consider Homo sapiens an endangered species.
8. If your city leaders can't manage a budget, they can't manage a disaster.
9. If history mentions "the Great Quake of" or "the Perfect Storm of" or any other major natural disaster in conjunction with your city's name, no matter the year cited, move.
10. If you hear gunfire at night and you don't live near a range, move.
11. If civic leaders are well received when they tighten gun laws, believing it will deter crime even when laws against assault and murder have not, they don't understand criminals, and the public there doesn't understand independent action. Move.

12. If you live within sight of huge tanks, concrete cylinders, or similar industrial storage facilities surrounded by chain-link fences topped by barbed wire or razor tape, move. If they're dangerous now, what are they going to be like after an extended power failure, fire, flood, quake, or terrorist incident?
13. Same thing if there are a lot of warning signs regarding flammables, chemicals, or other stored threats in huge containers or warehouses where you live, particularly if coupled with evacuation routes. Just move.

Although the above recommendations might appear to be trite or common sense, we too often see victims on the news who are "shocked" at what happens regularly in their locales. If you can't be clear of these obvious indicators, you must work harder to mitigate their potential impacts.

POLICE, EMS, AND DOMINOS

There's an old saw about testing police response in some areas, and it involves calling for the police, the paramedics, and pizza delivery at the same time following a disturbance and seeing who arrives first. The expectation is that you'll be finishing your cold pizza while watching the paramedics work when the cops arrive.

TRADE-OFFS

In the realm of preparedness, as in most other fields, there are trade-offs we need to accept. Deciding what is truly important and accepting that your needs will perhaps never fully be satisfied is a price of intelligent preparation, and if you're realizing trade-offs, you're at least thinking about things. Examples of trade-offs made in appropriating equipment might include cost vs. durability, design preferences conflicting with practical use, and so on. With locations there are multiple trade-offs. Many survivalists shun the urban centers as places to live, although they might work in them and thus spend the majority of their time there. There is also the trade-off of longer commutes, which are periods of vulnerability and expense, but having a more secure home away from the city is worth it to them. Trade-offs prevent many decisions from being 100 percent perfect, but they are reality. Remember President Teddy Roosevelt's famous quote that opens this book: "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

I'm fortunate in that I live in an area where the response is excellent, and we've seen mere minutes pass before the emergency responders arrive. Our police are professional and quick and the paramedics top-notch, one of many reasons for living where I do. Parts of my city are violent and active enough that the cops and EMTs get a lot of good experience that pays off in my quieter neighborhood. When our police and EMS arrive, they are alert and capable and we can count on them.

EMS response is obviously crucial when you need it, and it's a consideration when selecting your home and operating area. Ironically, if parts of your city suffer from continual problems just as parts of mine do, you too might benefit by having well-trained, experienced response personnel coming to your quieter area. Even a quieter area adjacent to a more volatile area might reap benefits from the experience and training of the EMS and police. However, as a survivalist you are aware that in a large-scale or regional disaster, they're likely not going to be available to you . . . but they'll be doing a better job than a less capable group elsewhere.

The cost to you for this extra layer of security and emergency medical response? Nothing beyond what you normally pay in taxes.

HOW REMOTE SHOULD YOU GO?

Isolation is great for security to some extent, and living in a wisely chosen remote site helps reduce certain risks, but you also might be reducing your access to important assets. You need to consider the balance between the benefits of isolation and privacy and access to such conveniences as emergency medical response or outlets for inexpensive food, hardware, and supplies. For example, I know an individual who has a decent survivalism plan for his retirement. He's moving to a rural area where there's sufficient groundwater, low crime, great neighbors, and a good all-around view. However at this point, he and his wife are vigorous people in their 50s; the situation will be different when they are elderly. It's a very long drive to any medical facilities, and EMS and police are a long way off. So, his trade-off involves lower crime and more space and privacy for preparedness, but at a loss of essential services and being cut off from any serious medical help in a really bad situation.

Chapter 4
Low-Cost Steps to Take Right Now

You can take steps right now that cost little or nothing yet will tremendously advance your preparedness. Complete these tasks and you'll be way ahead of where you are now, and far ahead of many survivalists with years of experience.

GET ONLINE

The best means of getting information quickly is to learn to use the Internet, so if you're not online, find a way of getting online. Go to the library if you don't have computer or Internet access and find out how to surf the Web. If you wish to maintain a low profile, only go to such standard government sites as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Homeland Security and not to the ad hoc survivalist sites, which may or may not have good information anyway. If you check out the major federal sites following any mention of FEMA or Homeland Security in the

news, you won't be doing anything unusual—hundreds of thousands of citizens will be doing the same.

DETERMINE THE THREATS IN YOUR AREA

There's no sense in prepping for a tsunami when you live in Kansas. On the other hand, you might be surprised that Arkansas, Missouri, and even Florida have experienced tremendously powerful earthquakes in the past. The quickest way to determine the threats in your area is to ask the long-term locals or to tap into something called HIVA with an Internet search. HIVA stands for Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Assessment, or Hazard Identification Vulnerability Analysis. HIVA documents (or something similar) for your area should be available from local government agencies in charge of disaster response and public safety.

You should also become familiar with an incredible reference. Go to www.fema.gov and in the site's search box type in "Are You Ready." What you will find is an online manual that provides not only a lot of practical preparedness information but also n outline of the different threats, man-made and natural, for different states. Similar information is frequently available as a download on individual state websites. Look for links to sections on public safety, emergency response, or disaster relief.

TAKE CLASSES ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Check police and fire departments, town halls, libraries, churches, and emergency volunteer groups for free classes on preparedness, and don't be shy. I once saw a notice for a briefing given by my state's Emergency Management Division and went to what ended up being a most eye-opening, realistic, and information-packed day on disaster preparedness. It turned out I'd stumbled upon a frank course of instruction and awareness training intended specifically for local city employees *only*. I wasn't a city employee, but I stayed, knowing that my motives were pure and it's easier to receive forgiveness than permission. Fortunately, it worked out fine: they acted pleased that I, a mere citizen, took an interest. These types of classes aren't the feel-good cheerleading that some agencies put on for

FOOD PANIC

In April 2008, there was an eye-opening demonstration of how world problems can affect us locally. One day the media set ablaze the "Silent Tsunami of Hunger" by mentioning that the cost of staples worldwide had skyrocketed. That day, according to the Associated Press, rice futures (per hundred pounds) reached an incredible $24.82 from 62 cents in July 2007! The AP reported the next day that Sam's Club and Costco were limiting rice sales, and the word rationing got thrown around.

That's all it took; the rush was on, and many small restaurants and prudent individuals attempted to stockpile rice before prices rose further. I went to Bo Han Market, an Asian food store, that same day to gauge impact and saw nearly empty shelves where the tall stacks of various types of rice normally stood. Most of the customers of this market are first-generation Asians, and severe food shortages are within the memories of many of their families.

It didn't matter that there wasn't actually a shortage of rice in the United States—just a mention of rationing created a shortage as people moved to get what they could. For anyone who walked into the store planning on buying their regular ration of bulk rice and saw the temporarily empty shelves, the value of preparedness is clear. With the light-speed of communications today, panic-buying situations like this can occur in hours. It can happen with meat, gasoline, or any other essential commodity.

It even once happened with toilet paper, and it was all because of an innocent joke made by *Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson. During his nightly monologue on December 19, 1973, Carson made a quip about a shortage of toilet paper based on a news snippet regarding late U.S. government bids for the stuff. Carson reached an audience of some 20 million viewers, and the next day, seemingly every one of them rushed to the store to purchase as much TP as they could carry. A few nights later Johnny explained that there was really no shortage, but it took a few weeks for stores to restock to pre-panic levels.

citizens; these are the real deal for no-nonsense disaster preparation and response.

INVENTORY AND ORGANIZE EXISTING SUPPLIES

It doesn't make sense to get pumped up and start accumulating caches of gear and food when you may already have such items. Nor is it wise to go stumbling around frantically looking for what you need after the problem has started. So find out what you have on hand and organize it. Determine what you own in the way of flashlights, sleeping bags, camp stoves, duct tape, canvas, nail and staple guns, and canned, boxed, and dry

foods. You should already know what firearms you own and where the ammunition is. Don't overlook routine things like having a pair of jumper cables, knowing where your jack is, checking the spare tire in your car, or making sure no one pillaged the first-aid kit in the kitchen.

Now, organize that stuff. Put like items together, label all containers clearly, and distribute other items like flashlights and batteries to where you need them, like in your nightstand and near your front door, so you don't have to fumble around in the dark looking for them during the next blackout. Simply knowing what is on hand and where it is saves both time and money. After your power comes back on, put things back!

SAFEGUARD IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Gather your important documents and make several copies. This includes things like actual Social Security cards, contracts, mortgages, recent tax returns, divorce decrees, birth certificates, passports, military records, big receipts, and other such items. Send one set of the documents by secure means to a trusted family member or friend, or at least let them know where you've hidden them. Place the originals in a safe deposit box if you have one or, at a minimum, in a waterproof bag. Better yet, place the documents in a waterproof bag within your safe deposit box! Included in this stack should be a list of your personal information, including billing addresses, account numbers and balances, credit card information, retirement information, blood types, and medical concerns for all family members. You can even go as far as including multiple photographs and fingerprints of everyone. Finally, toss in some blank envelopes, checks, stamps, and pens (and pencils and a sharpener as backup).

By having all of this paperwork in various safe locations, you will be in a much better position to rebuild your life if your home is wiped out in a disaster. Don't forget an up-to-date video of all your possessions, including the guns and any expensive jewelry. Have it burned to a CD or DVD so it can fit in a safe deposit box, and an extra copy should go with the backup set of documents. It will be worth its weight in gold when it comes time to haggle with your insurance company.

KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S LOCATION

Know where your children are throughout the day, whether you are with them or not. When in public, always set meeting places in case of separation. Know their friends, their friends' parents, and their phone numbers and addresses. Learn *all* their routes to and from school, including shortcuts or longer routes taken while walking home with friends. Find out not only what class your kids are in and with which teacher for each period but also the classroom numbers and the locations in the building, as you might have to go in during the chaos and get them out. Asking a harried middle-aged school administrator with a gaggle of panicked third graders underfoot where Sarah James from the first grade is isn't efficient, and admitting, "No, I don't know her teacher's name," is just as negligent as it sounds.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN SAFETY SKILLS

Teach your children safety skills, such as when to dial 911. Teach them to run and hide if there are bad men entering your house and they're not yet seen, and know where your children will go to hide. Teach them when they need to get out and which neighbor to go to, and make arrangements beforehand with a neighbor you know and trust. Show them how to drop and take cover if there is gunfire, and the crucial difference between cover and concealment. Establish a secret code word with your children so they know who to trust and whom they can leave with if you're injured and have to send someone else. Very young children can learn their own home phone number.

In your most level, calm, parenting manner, explain the various types of natural disasters that could afflict your area and how to best cope with them. Teach them how to duck, cover, and hold on during earthquakes if you live in California, or what to do in the event of a wildfire if you live in a dry, wooded location. Promise that you'll come to get them at some point during an emergency but, until you arrive, to follow the instructions of the teachers or police or firemen in the area.

KEY PHRASES FOR SAFETY

During the early stages of the Cold War, "duck and cover" became a mantra intended to calm children and give them an impression that they weren't utterly helpless during a nuclear exchange. Since we know blast damage and radiation sickness made duck and cover nothing more than a morale booster, using catch phrases might seem less than helpful in crisis to some old-timers. But some concepts locked away in phrases will save lives.

"Stranger danger" refers to teaching children that they shouldn't talk to strangers and should shout and run to an adult they know, like their parents or teacher, if approached by a stranger.

"Run and hide" is a good response for children if problems, such as an intruder, erupt in the home, especially at night. Teach them to grab a cordless phone if possible. A good hiding place should be previously identified for them, like under a bed or in a closet or bathtub, so if there's a violent intrusion into the house, the parents might have an opportunity to fight back and run less risk of harming their children. This is more about getting out of the way when violence erupts, and it's better than merely standing in the middle of the room or cowering on the bed.

"Drop and take cover" is an action to take during a shooting. Being in the line of fire, whether targeted or not, is a tragic possibility for anyone, and standing like a doe in the headlights is a response for some untrained people. Dropping to the ground or floor, or moving behind a solid barrier (cover) is a lifesaver that should be taught beyond the military. The steps of dropping and taking cover can save lives even if training for a very remote possibility.

"Cover and concealment" and knowing that there is a difference between the two is important as well. If given a choice between two objects during the unlikely event of a shooting—a car and a bush, for example—someone who knows that a car can be solid cover and a bush is mere concealment will fare better.

"Don't hide, stay low, check door, get out fast, and meet" are the steps for getting out of a home during a fire. The steps mean to never hide from a fire, get down below the smoke and fumes, check the door to see if it's hot (if it is, don't open that door), go to the window, get out of the house fast, and go to the designated meeting place.

"Stop, drop, and roll" is taught as a response to being on fire. It's important to teach your children that running is the wrong thing to do if their clothes catch fire, and when upright, fire goes up, toward our face and head. Rolling around in dirt and attempting to smother the flames is the proper action.

"Drop, cover, and hold on" is the response to earthquakes. It involves getting down, getting under a stout object like a table or desk, and holding on tightly during the shaking and aftershocks. Because buildings in the United States and other developed countries are better made, and the primary danger in many places involves crumbling facing and breaking glass, it's better to remain inside until the shaking stops rather than run outside and risking injuries from falling glass and

stumbling over debris. If a sturdy piece of furniture or doorway isn't close by, crouch in an inside corner and cover up.

These phrases and concepts may be uncomfortable, but teaching them is part of protecting your children against a hard world. Doing so without scaring your kids is your job, mom and dad, but once you teach them about safety, you've given them a better chance in life.

MAP OUT KEY LOCATIONS

Fully orient yourself and your family to such key locations as school, grandma's house, your workplace, and home by using street maps and having the children pay attention while you drive. Note the distances along the way, and make sure the children become familiar with landmarks en route. If the turnoff into your neighborhood is next to the Chevy dealership, they should know that. There's nothing wrong with having an annotated map with phone numbers on it. You might be disoriented for any of a number of reasons following a disaster, and this will help you sort things out.

It couldn't hurt to learn how to pace count to figure distances between points in case you ever have to walk to a safe location. The most simple means of learning to pace count is to go to a school football field and begin at one end and walk forward, counting each time your left foot takes a step while walking at a normal stride and at a normal pace. When you reach the other end, you know approximately how many paces it takes for you to reach 100 yards. Reach that number 17 times and go a bit over halfway to 18 times and you've gone a mile (1,760 yards in a mile).

ESTABLISH MEETING PLACES

Establish meeting places near your home, the children's school, and work, if those locations are no longer tenable as rendezvous points. For fire evacuations, a location outside must be identified for meeting to check and see if everyone is safely out of the house. For areas prone to flooding or mudslides, the meeting place might be the officially designated evacuation area.

Suppose your spouse works at the mall or another crowded location. An incident might occur there, causing an internal evacuation. Identify at least two possible meeting locations, such as near a specific entrance or a location in proximity to but away from the mall. This practice is good for places frequently visited as well, such as if you regularly attend sporting events or local attractions.

ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Establish multiple ways to contact your family and friends. Have both cordless and old-fashioned cord phones in your home. Keep one of the old plug-in-the-wall phones that don't need power to operate (phone lines are separate from power lines); when the power goes, many cordless phones are worthless.

Local phone service may be down, but long distance might be working. Therefore, ensure that your child keeps the phone number of a distant relative handy, as it is unlikely he or she will be affected by the same disaster. Instruct family and friends to call there to exchange information. Your out-of-area contact should be someone reliable and available, someone who actually writes things down and isn't vague in passing on information. Important: politely let that person know you're going to use them as a message board!

Alternatives to a phone system might include Web boards where you can post information and instructions, if by some miracle the Internet is up in the area.

Establish an improvised message board by stashing a large writing surface and some magic markers near your home, perhaps on the porch. This way anyone can leave a written message for you that you can see when you go up to the house, and you can communicate in kind if they come by and you're not home. It's a decent practice in the best of times, and you might simply go with a dry-erase board from the dollar store or, even more inexpensively, any scrap of sheet plastic (better than cardboard or paper because it will hold up in wet weather). Stash some more pens outside in case the other ones walk away. Be careful in the message, though. "Gone for the week; alarm not working" isn't what you'd put on there.

DEVELOP EMERGENCY CODES

Develop code systems for emergency situations that don't require power at all. This could encompass visuals near a house or selected location and include simple things like different colored cloth in the window (e.g., green = "Everything is fine"; red = "Danger! Don't come in! Call the police!"; blue = "We're not here; go to the neighbors"). I learned this system from my high school girlfriend over 25 years ago, who simply hung different colored T-shirts, supposedly to dry after being hand washed, to convey messages for me when I drove up. Different colors meant "I'm not going to school, stop in," "I'm not going to school, sick, don't stop in," "My dad's gone, come on in," "My dad's upset with you, lay low," and other things. It worked incredibly well when I was a young fella, but we didn't have text messaging back then.

DO A HOME SAFETY CHECK

Go through your house and check for fire and other safety hazards. Regularly test your smoke detectors and smack the bottoms of your fire extinguishers so the powdered propellant doesn't settle on the bottom of the tank. Ensure that you have enough surge protectors in the right places and that everything flammable is secured away from heating elements, baseboard heaters, and fireplaces.

Identify safe areas in the house for shelter-in-place and storm protection. You're most likely to select a walk-in closet, bathroom that lacks windows, or hallway. Clear your hallways of trip hazards, which you don't want to stumble on while moving around in the dark. Push beds and especially cribs away from shelves and windows so occupants won't be hit by falling items or breaking glass. Keep a pair of slippers or slip-on shoes and a flashlight near each bed, as stepping on glass is one of the most frequent causes of injury during a natural disaster, as is running into things. Remove heavy items from shelves, and secure freestanding bookcases and other shelving to walls so they can't topple.

Check the doors and windows, especially those you don't normally use, to see if they can be opened from the inside in case you must leave through them. Make sure everyone knows how to operate the knobs and latches.

DO A HOME SECURITY CHECK

Go over your home's security features by checking to see how vulnerable you are to unauthorized entry from the outside. All doors and windows require sturdy locks, and outdoor lighting is a must. Having your cell phone next to your bed at night allows you to call the police even if someone takes out your home phone by disabling the phone lines before entering the house.

A trick: ask your children how they get in when they forget their key. It's often shocking how easily your own family can defeat your security without damaging anything. Fix those problems, and enforce accountability for all home keys.

KEEP A CLEAN HOUSE

A clean, organized, uncluttered living space will be much easier and less stressful to live in during hard times than a pigsty. It will make it easier to find things, you will be less likely to trip over crap lying around, and it's a hell of a lot more sanitary during a time when proper sanitation can become a life-or-death issue.

Keeping a clean house also discourages vermin—mice, rats, squirrels, insects, and other critters that might find your stocks of food. Besides keeping your home space well scrubbed, do whatever it takes—traps, poison, cats—to prevent such pests from consuming or spoiling your primary and emergency food supplies.

LEARN HOW TO CONSERVE WATER NOW

Water may be scarce in an emergency, and it is the one item you absolutely must have for long-term survival. By practicing some simple household routines now, you will eliminate many water-sucking chores from your to-do list after an emergency strikes.

Make it a practice to keep your laundry from piling up. By keeping your clothing clean and sorted, you're better aware of what you have, and it's there if you need to grab some and go. You also remove one concern in that it'll be days before you need to worry about clean clothing. Priorities include socks and underwear; given a bad situation, dirty shirts and pants can be worn longer.

Keep your kitchen sink clear. With the sink clear, you can rapidly move into filling vessels with water, and your typical kitchen sink (or double sink) holds a lot of water if you have reliable drain plugs. Keeping a bathtub clean and the plug handy is also important, as those gallons of water are in a convenient position to be used for flushing the toilet.

RESEARCH OLD-TIME SKILLS

Ask the question: How did they do it in the past? How did folks have lights at night? How did they dispose of their bodily wastes? If you learn how tasks were performed without electricity, plumbing, or other modern conveniences, you will get a better picture of what bad times are like, and you can plan more thoroughly for alternative ways to provide the same functions.

Fortunately, there are many fantastic books on these topics, available inexpensively from a number of sources. Barnes & Noble, Dover, and other publishers have reprinted quaint old books that are no longer under copyright protection, and some of them are quite clever. Lyons Press/Globe Pequot did a great series of reprints of early-20th-century tomes on mountain man and Indian skills, building shanties, and related topics. There's also the old *Foxfire* series of books and the still-in-print *Backwoodsman* magazine, both wonderful repositories of useful, primitive tools and techniques.

MAKE A READY-TO-ROLL KIT

This costs a little bit of money, but it won't break the bank. Buy one of those quality, thick-walled, very large, stout trash cans with wheels and lid and dedicate it to preparedness. This portable, rainproof container is your get-stuff-out-of-the-house-quickly vessel.

Put several items of canned or dehydrated food and bottles of water in the bottom, but only after storing it all in separate waterproof containers. This way they won't soil the other items if there is leakage, and without the waterproofing, mildew and mold could ruin everything.

Next, put in your sleeping bags and a set of dry clothing for each person, again in waterproof containers (heavy-duty

garbage bags work well for this). To maximize space, look into "compression sacks" at camping stores for the sleeping bags. These tough stuff sacks have four cinch straps on the outside that allow you to compress your bag into a surprisingly compact package. They are wonderful space savers.

Copies of important documents in a waterproof container and other items like a first-aid kit, flashlights, and tarps go on top. Leave the filled container in your secure garage near the door, spare room, or wherever. If your home becomes uninhabitable, you at least have a grab-it-and-go set that will get you through the first days if you have to live outside or move on. If you can't afford one of those wheeled trash cans, get some large plastic bins or just standard trash cans and do the same. You can drag them out if need be. Don't forget to tape the lid and mark it "Supplies" or "No trash."

LEARN BASIC ELECTRICITY AND PLUMBING

Even if you're not the world's best handyman, things like repairing a malfunctioning toilet or replacing a light switch are relatively easy to do. Learning this not only makes you more self-reliant in general (and saves you a ton of money when you don't have to call a plumber or electrician for simple fixes during normal times), it will also familiarize you with basic plumbing and electric work that could come in handy if you're faced with a situation during a crisis. Reference books like the Reader's Digest *New Fix-It-Yourself Manual* and *Complete Fix-It* from Time-Life Books are wonderful illustrated guides on electrical and plumbing work, appliance repair, and similar household tasks. The Reader's Digest book rates each job according to difficulty, which is helpful if you fear getting in over your head. You can get inexpensive copies of these books at secondhand stores.

LEARN BASIC SELF-RESCUE

Learn the basics of emergency extraction, fighting small fires, and other self-rescue operations. In a really bad disaster, you are your own fire department, paramedic, utility company, and police department! Paladin Press publishes an excellent book, *Self-*

Reliance during Natural Disasters and Civil Unrest, that is a great resource for the self-rescue/self-reliance aspect of preparedness. One of the important points made in the book is to understand your home's utility systems so you have a better idea how to deal with them during an emergency. Too many people don't know enough about their heating and water systems, whether they live in a home, condo, or apartment, and such ignorance can turn a minor matter into a disaster if they don't know how to simply cut the water or power to the dwelling. Don't forget your immediate surroundings: you might not need a gas shut-off wrench because you don't use natural gas, but your neighbor might, and he might not be home to shut off that flow following a disaster.

TAKE A BASIC FIRST-AID COURSE

Reading books is one thing, but nothing beats hands-on training on CPR, stopping bleeding, splinting broken bones, and other emergency medical-response skills. The most economical first choice would be a one-day class sponsored by the American Red Cross. Cost of the course ($40 for first aid only, $70 for first aid and CPR at the time of this writing) includes a well-illustrated manual. The course provides valuable training on how to assess a scene before you move in to administer aid so you don't jeopardize your safety while trying to help someone else. This is very valuable knowledge for post-disaster scenarios that often involve rubble and debris, downed power lines, etc. Class schedules and locations in your area can be found at www.redcross.org.

If you want to take it to the next level, consider a backcountry or wilderness first-aid course for civilians (as opposed to professionals like wilderness guides and search-and-rescue personnel). They're more expensive than the Red Cross, but the value comes in the fact that these courses specifically teach how to administer first aid under difficult conditions, including how to improvise medical tools and treatment. Many of these courses don't require a stint in the woods, but they will probably involve hands-on scenario training that is among the most valuable parts of the instruction.

TALK TO PEOPLE

One of my favorite and best means of learning about useful skills for preparedness, survival, and self-reliance is to simply ask people about their specialties. You can learn many things from carpenters, handymen, truckers, nurses, police officers, firemen, and even barmaids and bouncers. With preparedness continually in the back of your mind, you can amass knowledge inexpensively in this way.

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If you follow just the steps outlined above, you're better prepared than most of the people in the United States and around the world. At little or no expense, you've just improved your survival preparedness immeasurably.

Chapter 5

STAYING OR BUGGING OUT

"Should I stay or should I go?"
—The Clash

Two significant options for survivalists are to stay where one is or to leave before, during, or after the trouble commences. Many people's preparations include stockpiling everything and hardening their positions; others plan for maximum mobility. While staying in place and hunkering down provides tremendous advantages, making plans to bug out is important as well. Conversely, those who plan on bugging out need contingency plans for staying in place in case they are unable to leave for whatever reason. Remember: a survivalist preserves options.

HUNKERING DOWN

A "retreat" is the location a survivalist prepares and plans on remaining in for the duration of a crisis and during times of shortage. For some the retreat is a destination, separate from their

home. For shoestring survivalism, the best choice is to already be where one needs to be in a crisis.

The advantages of already living in one's retreat are many, including increasing the odds of already being in position when bad things happen, not maintaining security and supplies in two locations, and cutting the expense of having two sites to rent or purchase and pay taxes on. Besides, the midst of a disaster is a really, really bad time to take a road trip.

With shoestring survivalism, your home, if selected wisely, should be your retreat. You're often there already, or have a better chance of making it there, when a crisis erupts. It's normally central to all the locations your family goes to regularly. Using your home as a retreat enables you to maintain a secure supply of essential items like stockpiled food, water, equipment, firearms, and ammunition as well as have access to your clothing, blankets, and other critical supplies. You also protect your home and possessions by remaining in it, and you intimately know the lay of the land and the mood of the place, whereas a remote retreat is not under your observation.

If your home is your retreat, then you must do what you can to ensure that the security is solid, and you must get to know your home and the area around it. This is why site threat awareness response is critical when selecting a place to live.

If you live in an apartment, it's better to choose a unit on the second story or higher, even though you increase your risk of fire from below. Apartments on the ground floor have low-level windows that lessen security, whereas the higher the level the fewer individuals who will pass by and peer in the windows or come to the door unbidden. A second-story apartment might also provide the height needed to be above floodwaters, tsunamis, hurricane surges, and similar problems.

If you live in a house, you might be more inclined to harden the entrances, and you are likely to have more space to stockpile items. But these are all topics for later chapters.

BUGGING OUT

"Bugging out" in survivalism means to depart your home or work for another predetermined location or to simply get away. In some situations, one simply can't remain behind no matter how

COMPOUND

For heaven's sake, don't call your survivalist retreat a *compound*.

Survivalist-oriented groups do exist today, and they do become of interest to the feds, normally for weapons violations, real or (more often) imagined. But if they identify their community as a compound, they're virtually guaranteed a visit from the stormtroopers. The Branch Davidians in Waco had their home/church/classrooms and outbuildings labeled a compound, and the term was used to demonize groups of survivalists like the Freemen in Montana and the individuals living in Randy Weaver's cluster of shacks on Ruby Ridge. It is as if having a "compound" makes you an instant enemy of the state. (Of course, this doesn't apply if your compound is located in Hyannisport or Kennebunckport. If so, the media and authorities will consider your compound to be a "family compound"—then you're golden. You get extra points if your last name is Kennedy or Bush . . . but that's not shoestring survivalism!)

So if you have more than one building, even if it's just a house and a shack or separate garage, or even one really big building, never refer to it as a compound, or bunker, or even retreat for that matter. Refer to it simply as your home.

If I ever decide to form a community of individuals interested in survivalism, I'd prefer the term "chateau." No ramshackle compound or bunker-like retreat among a jumble of shacks for us; we'd live in a charming chateau surrounded by rustic outbuildings.

How threatening is a chateau?

It's a *French* word . . .

(A friend of mine mentioned that if I use chateau, I'll be mistaken for being a surrender monkey, so he goes with the Swiss "chalet." The Swiss are like Germans, only with guns.)

well-stocked and well-sited your home might be. An evacuation order is given, the river rises, fire threatens, a chemical spill spreads—all are legitimate reasons to bug out. While survivalists strive to be in areas free of such threats, all survivalists must make a bug-out plan for getting to a destination that is out of the danger zone, preferably where necessary resources can be secured for the special needs of family members.

As noted in the beginning of this book, a key objective of survivalism is to avoid becoming a refugee, but you also don't want to be someone who is fleeing simply to get away, without a destination or plan in mind. Therefore, having a predetermined destination is essential. This place should be out of the problem area, or one that is secure from the chaos, with provisions and security, a retreat rather than simply being away. Away is a direction, not a destination.

Survivalists strive to avoid the potential filth, noise, crowding, and crime of a government-run shelter, where victimization, humiliation, and infection are real possibilities. In a shelter, dignity is stolen in exchange for the promise of being taken care of by the nanny state. However, shoestring survivalists also realize that going to a shelter might be the only option, and one should plan for that as well. Fortunately, all shelters aren't as poorly run as the ones in New Orleans during and following Hurricane Katrina. (Shelters are the subject of Chapter 6.)

For a budget survivalist, spending weeks or months in a hotel is not an option, as it would be too expensive. Therefore, bugging out means moving to a family member or friend's location. It is vital to have a mutual arrangement with a reliable friend or family member in advance. You might even decide to have a tiered bug-out plan: say, a close location such as an aunt's house across town for a limited-impact situation, your brother's home across the state in case of a larger problem, and the final option a friend in another state. (I witnessed this following some flooding in western Washington. Several family members of a friend were living in one house that had withstood the flooding. It was amusing to see that each family group occupied separate bedrooms, and they each brought their own big televisions. There were huge TVs in each room, each showing different programs to age-segregated audiences!)

Ideally, all locations should have caches of extra food, water, clothing, and equipment to accommodate the additional guests and to avoid having to incur immediate expenses. As a courtesy, you might offer your home as shelter to these people in the event of an emergency on their end. The trade-off for the agreement is that you need to bring someone into your survivalist plans, raising a set of problems that we will discuss in Chapter 13.

Car camping as a bug-out plan is an option for some families. Going to a KOA in a neighboring state (if you can afford the fees) gives access to water, toilets, and some security. Otherwise, there are innumerable possibilities for free camping on national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. This is an ideal plan for families that already go camping—all the gear is probably already organized, stored, and ready to go, and the routine is familiar for everyone, even the kids. You might be surprised years later when children talk fondly of the "big camping

trip" or might not even make the connection between the camping adventure and the disaster they avoided. Putting the right spin on events is a trait of strong parenting, even amid a disaster.

GOIN' GYPSY

One viable option that some folks exercise daily is what I call "goin' gypsy," or staying on the move. Perhaps millions of Americans are either totally nomadic or migratory right now, getting around in anything from cramped, wired-bumper hatchbacks, to VW vans bedecked with Grateful Dead stickers, up to recreational vehicles as large as and more expensive than many people's homes. There's even a contingent of iron-butt bikers going from place to place without real homes, crashing for the night wherever and whenever they feel like it. They might travel from city to city or state to state and settle down for weeks or months. This is their regular lifestyle.

These modern nomads include retirees seeing the country and visiting friends, living off their retirements. Others follow craft and trade shows, swap meets, concerts, and special events, supporting themselves by selling items or doing odd jobs. They know where to camp or people to visit who will put them up for the night . . . or for months. Some of them maintain a network of friends and relatives who have property large enough to accommodate their vehicles.

The movie *Into the Wild* features two older hippies who are wonderful illustrations of people living the gypsy lifestyle. "Slab City" featured in the film is an actual location in southeast California and offers a glimpse into how a portion of the road gypsy community lives in the United States.

Theoretically, an alert highway wanderer can utterly avoid almost any bad situation by migrating during the seasons, staying tuned to the local news, and heading out before things happen. They have the freedom to avoid crowded urban centers, earthquake-prone areas, and the blizzard, tornado, and hurricane zones during their peak seasons.

In situations like mass evacuations due to natural disasters, such people are often ready to roll and can beat the rush (which is actually a crawl on the freeways after an evac order is given,

but it's a crawl in the right direction). By the time you get an evacuation order from your mayor, governor, FEMA, or whoever, they are listening to or viewing the announcement from several hundred miles away. (That's actually a great tip we can learn from these modern gypsies: if there's a good possibility the authorities will order an evacuation, leave before they do so.)

For shoestring survivalists considering this mobile option, the primary constraints are money, maintenance, and fuel. Other concerns include meeting all the different laws of the different states regarding firearms and other items that may or may not be legal once you cross state lines, and the security concerns of having one's home and transportation all in one.

REGARDING MOTORCYCLES

I'm no biker, but I know some bikers are survivalists, and you can get some of them to talk. Here's what they tell me.

Whether your ride is a Harley or rice burner, what matters is having a reliable machine when needed. I know one guy who uses his show bike for Friday nights but keeps a rice burner for bugging out, as it's 100 percent reliable and the pretty one isn't, at least not yet. A motorcycle can't carry much, it provides no shelter, and it's dangerous (open air is bad protection from other drivers and hard pavement), but it doesn't take much gas to haul ass, and it preserves yet one more option by providing maximum mobility. Even when the roads are jammed, with a motorcycle you can weave through stopped vehicles, ride the shoulder, and go on some trails. With its limited fuel needs, a bike might be superior to a car or SUV under such circumstances.

If you have a motorcyle, you would be wise to incorporate it into your contingency planning.

HEADING FOR THE HILLS

"Heading for the hills" involves the ultimate in bugging out. Individuals who plan on this route intend to head deep into the woods and live off the land, so they normally possess a limited amount of food and water, some tools, camping or field gear, and weapons, and they probably have at least a passing familiarity with backpacking, fishing, and hunting.

Many preparedness experts discount the notion of living in the woods as foolish macho fantasy, yet there are plenty of people who naively believe they can grab a pack, take off for the mountains, and live off nature's bounty. What will happen is that most will go from being survivalists to struggling for survival within a few days.

Many who talk about their plans to run to the hills (the planning usually ends there) are the least capable of carrying it out because of immaturity. They're correct in that they generally are young or rugged individuals, perhaps not as hard as they think they are in acceptance of misery, but healthy and without family obligations, so they are ideal candidates for being out on their own. But the hard reality is that this bunch will thin itself out by dying from exposure, killing each other off, or more likely, go drifting back to where they ran from. True backwoodsmen with plans to wait out hard times in the hills know that it'll be worse than opening day of hunting season, with too many amateurs out there moving around, making noise, spooking the game, ruining the streams, and spreading trash.

Some of these yahoos might seize upon harsh realities and become a security threat to you. Their solution to their problems is to become your problem, and they can become a terrible concern in times of chaos, being no different than looters in the city. They may plan on nothing more than raiding gardens, but the step between taking a deer in the woods and a cow or goat in your yard isn't too far if they believe they can justify it through "survivalism" or merely if they are hungry. As relatively few of us have such livestock, a more likely target might be the supplies in your shed, garage, or basement. Many of these sorts might be armed, perhaps with military/paramilitary surplus firearms better suited for combat than hunting.

Those most capable of making it in the hills are those who are most aware of what it will take, and they begin by not telling anyone outside of their friends and family circle of their intentions. This includes some very balanced, mature types who could go out into the wilderness of Alaska and carve a rewarding life, as well as those who are vicious enough to make it in the wild because their techniques would include preying on others.

Shoestring Survivalism

In some parts of the world, people already live in the woods and jungles, fishing, gathering, hunting, and making what they need other than the few consumer goods they've learned to depend upon, simple things like a few plastic bowls. These people are living embodiments of shoestring survivalism. While at the old U.S. Army Jungle Operations Training Center in Panama, I led my soldiers on a patrol through that hellish world of mud, black palms, downpours, and steam. While we rested on a trail, we encountered a beautiful young Panamanian woman wearing only a man's dress shirt. I couldn't help noticing that her shapely legs and bare feet were devoid of the scratches and abrasions that marked much of our exposed skin. She knew how to live out there. Our guide, a Panamanian, explained that she lived in the jungle with her family. Once a month she danced for sailors in Panama City, and our guide said that that brought more than enough money for her to buy items to supplement what her extended family got out of the jungle and sea. So even today, some folks only need cooking oil, flour or corn meal, coffee, sugar, and a few other items to survive—they can get the rest through their own know-how and skills.

The reality is that heading for the hills is not a realistic option for most of us. Any responsible person with children or elderly to care for certainly can't go running off into the woods, with or without them. But if the backcountry is a viable option for you, you've got a lot of preparing to do. A good bug-out bag—normally a top-quality civilian or military rucksack with a repair kit, adequate clothing, sleeping bag, tent or tarps, wire for snares, fire starter, knife, firearms, ammo, and maps—is only a start. Food, equipment, ammunition, and clothing cached in advance are crucial to success. What is also necessary is fieldcraft and experience out in the terrain you wish to own. If you get far enough from the roads, know what you're doing, and are tough enough, you might make it for a while, long enough until things settle down. It's possible, it's miserable, but it might beat the alternatives of government shelters, collection centers, camps, or, for some, cells.

THE MORALITY OF SURVIVALISM

"Principles have no real force except when one is well-fed."
—Mark Twain

"No man is justified in doing evil on the ground of expedience."
—Theodore Roosevelt

The notion of running for the hills as a form of survivalism is an excellent segue to discuss morality and preparedness. Under extreme circumstances, the law either doesn't exist or doesn't address the current reality. Issues arise regarding not only your intentions and actions but those of others and your response to their actions. "Survival of the fittest" becomes more about taking care of number one regardless of others or sometimes even at the expense of others.

To put it another way, do you have an obligation to provide only for yourself and your family in crisis? How does one choose whom to help? Could you turn away a hungry child if you had limited supplies? Would you raid others to sustain your family? Would you really shoot looters in your supply shed? Should medical professionals euthanize to end suffering?

Pondering such hypothetical situations might seem to be a worthless exercise, but it really is an exercise in determining levels of preparation. Depending on how you answer the questions will determine such things as whether you need to gather additional food beyond your needs, or study the law regarding self-defense under extreme circumstances.

Chapter 6

Government Shelter Survival

Going to a shelter might seem an anathema to a survivalist. After all, we become survivalists because we're independent. However, going to a shelter during an emergency is still an option, and survivalism is about exploring and preserving options. It is also an inexpensive option because your basic needs—shelter, food, water, security—are provided.

With some dramatic exceptions like the debacle in New Orleans (although generally, the stories about shelters in New Orleans were far worse than the reality), FEMA and local community shelters are generally well run and organized, and they provide an assurance of some communications, overhead cover, water, food, and bathrooms. Many shelters have backup generators, stored provisions, and other resources, including capable staff members in communication with EMS and the outside. Because masses of people are advised to go to shelters, shelters often receive priority for emergency

response. A well-run shelter might include identification of medically trained people to provide assistance on-site.

A shelter might be the best option for those with special needs like the elderly, and a single mother with two or three children and no reliable friends might find a shelter a better option than a half-destroyed home without water or power. If you're dependent upon power for medical equipment or regularly need medicine, and you don't have sufficient quantities on hand to see you through the crisis, it might be better to go to a shelter and have people with pull help you rather than languish at home with no one to check on your condition. If you happened to be caught in a natural disaster while on a trip, a shelter might be better than the streets of a strange city, especially at night.

However, anything that involves bunches of people under one roof during difficult circumstances can become complicated, with inevitable negative examples. While some well-run shelters actually become community events that resemble a combination slumber party, church social, and camp, others become hellish travesties. You best know your neighbors and the people in your region. Imagine them under stress, with needs magnified, and without reason for civility. Now consider that you're all in the same big bedroom without walls for protection from each other—day after day, night after night.

Here's a trick. Each year during Halloween I see many of the local kids, but I also see some kids I don't recognize, and I learned from their parents that they bring their children to my neighborhood because it's safer and they get more and better stuff.

Makes a lot of sense for Halloween, so it makes incredible sense for survival! If it's easy enough to quickly discern which areas are good for trick or treating, it's easy enough to gauge which areas might be more stable during a disaster. If you live in a questionable area and could end up in a shelter, it might be feasible to move to a better area—not conducting a full evacuation, but getting away from the inner city or depressed area and to a shelter set up in a school with a higher tax base. Those living in the better areas may grimace as they read this, but this is about budget preparedness, and locating the best-run shelters is a classic shoestring survival strategy.

If you are going to a shelter for whatever reason, you should prepare for it just as you would any other survival situation.

Taking charge of many aspects of your stay in a shelter is possible in most situations.

WHERE TO LAND

If it's not well-organized and run, judiciously select where you're going to hunker down. First, size up the people around you. Don't be afraid to stereotype the others; if you have an experienced eye and someone looks like a threat, they probably are. Don't sit or select cots near them, and watch out for them. You'd be surprised where you may have honed the skills to assess the others. If you're a frequent visitor to the theater or a rider on the bus, or if you dine out a lot, you might already have the ability to quickly identify who are bad people to be around (boisterous, obnoxious, malevolent, smelly, etc.). Now imagine going 24/7 with those people, possibly for weeks. Sometimes you're wrong, but in these situations you don't have the luxury of time to figure it out. You might only have instinct left, so use it.

If you have children, you might wish to be near other children; if not, you might not want to have to experience shrieking voices all night and little hands prying into your stuff. But the presence of other children is often reassuring to kids, and many parents assume a parental role for any child in their area, so it's extra eyes watching out for yours. On the flip side, if you've brought comfort food, it might be hard to just give it to your kids while others watch them eat it . . . but this might be a good time to teach your kids about sharing, and those other parents might keep you in mind if they have something of value.

Choosing your roost is important. You want a place not too distant from the bathrooms, yet not so close as to continually smell them, especially in warm weather. Be aware of where food and beverages are going to be served. Again, you want to be close, but not too close—close enough that you can watch the preps and be in line in time, far enough from the lines and the trash.

HOW (AND WHY) TO HELP

Becoming like the staff is a huge advantage in the shelter. They'll put you to work, but they'll also keep you informed on what is available and what is going on. If you have a food han-

dler's permit, you might bring it, but that often isn't necessary to offer help.

Amazingly, many people in shelters decide that they're owed things, and they don't pitch in or do much else but complain and demand. Individuals who are helpful are valuable and scarce. Make yourself useful during daily operations and they'll cut you in.

WHAT TO BRING

Having a small, battery-operated radio goes without saying. Paperback books, a journal, and music players or pocket electronic games with ample batteries might be good distractions. Headsets or earpieces are good, as it's probably best to keep your music and news preferences to yourself. But know that the more you bring, the more you can lose, and people can see where you hide things: like other valuables or things that become valuable, all portable items need to be secured. (More on this below.)

For clothing, comfortable is the rule. Wear sweats in the winter and shorts summer and winter, and bring oversize T-shirts. Flip-flops can be picked up for a dollar a pair, and they're invaluable not just for the shower but for moving around the facility. For females of all ages, remember there are creeps among any large group of people, and you might be shocked but also don't be flattered that some find you interesting no matter what you look like if you're showing flesh.

Don't assume that the toilet paper, soap, and paper towels will be endless. You should bring along at least one roll of toilet paper per person in your group. I'd recommend the commercial type (that is, the type used in public places), which has a lot of sheets tightly wound, rather than perfumed, fluffy, store-bought stuff. It's quantity over quality in these situations.

Cut up a bar of soap so you can take chunks of it to the bathroom so you don't have to keep carrying it around. In this case, go with something like Irish Spring, as it'll help mask odors and the bar provides a mild deodorant effect in your items. You might consider bringing a towel or even a handkerchief to the shelter; you can wash your face with the latter, and it dries quickly. Make sure you air-dry it every time you use it. Other

toiletries include the obvious stuff: toothbrushes and paste, daily meds, hand sanitizer, and so on.

Having a lightweight folding chair, especially if you have any difficulty walking or standing, is invaluable. In addition to being your chair, it can be your nightstand and a privacy barrier. A light-framed director's folding chair can provide you not only with a seat, it can also serve as a good improvised cane/walker when folded, better than some canes because there's two points on the ground and it's more stable, and you can sit on it whenever you find yourself waiting. Consider attaching old backpack straps to the chair and have a healthier relative carry it. A director's chair made with tubular or squared aluminum framing is light to carry and provides good support for walking, and it beats sitting on a dirty or wet surface.

PRIVACY

Privacy is an obvious problem in a shelter, and bringing a sheet and a cane, even hangers and duct tape and, of course, 550 cord, might allow you to rig some screening to cut some of the light, noise, and dust. This may or may not be allowed, but even if it isn't, having a bit of duct tape, cord, and a few other items will come in handy for other things.

Earplugs and closed eyes can provide some privacy in a crowd. Earplugs are inexpensive, normally going for 50 cents a pair or less, and they're invaluable in crowded situations. Bring extras for your new neighbors. Whether you give them away or trade them, ensure that you keep at least a pair and a spare for yourself and everyone in your group. Those eye masks that they hand out on international plane flights also aren't a bad idea to help shut out the bustle around you. You can find them for less than a buck online or at places like K-Mart.

SECURITY

There are predators everywhere, as well as at least one thief in virtually every group, so you should have a means of securing your items. Old army duffle bags are easy to secure and come with backpack straps. They are water repellant, hold a lot

of items, and you can lock them to your cot. They're also comfortable to sit on when in line, or at least more comfortable than sitting on the ground, but they're heavy to carry long distances.

Valuables involve difficult decisions, and again, different things become valuables in a shelter. Your inexpensive radio, for example, or personal hygiene items are critical not only to you but also to those without. If you brought jewelry or other portable valuables to safeguard them, you might find them a constant worry and burden. Better to leave them elsewhere (at home, in a safe deposit box, etc.), and make sure you have ample insurance if they're worth a lot. If you bring them to a shelter, don't let anyone know you have them, and consider keeping them on your person at all times. All times. Thieves are quick and slick, and you might not even know when your items were stolen.

EVACUATION AND PETS

Pets aren't allowed in most shelters. Some people might smuggle in a bird, lizard, turtle, fish, rodent, or even a small dog or cat, but for larger animals or several animals, they probably won't be allowed in. For some this means shelters aren't an option; they vow to stay in their homes with their beloved pets, and many do. Others change their minds when their neighbors leave, the water works its way up the street, or burning embers start landing on the roof. At that point, it becomes easier to justify leaving Spot and Taffy on their own.

It is a poor time to consider what to do with your pets when a bus or National Guard truck pulls up in front of your house and tells you to grab a bag and evacuate. If you don't love your pet, this section isn't for you, but this is a real issue pet owners face that others might not understand. We love our animals, and that love, more than any other factor, might propel the decision whether or not to head out.

Appallingly, some individuals in New Orleans locked their animals, including big dogs, inside their sweltering, soon-to-be-flooded houses as the water rose and they knew they'd not be back for many days! These people then bemoaned the loss of the animals after they died from drowning, heat, thirst, or starvation.

While keeping a pet penned inside might be fantastic for animal control, preventing thousands of potentially dangerous dogs from forming packs and overrunning neighborhoods, know that they can do extensive damage to a house's in-

terior with waste, biting, and clawing. They can also cause filth by dying and decaying on the carpet or bed, bringing in swarms of flies and more vermin. If the pet is outside or has access to outside, there's at least the illusion, and maybe even the reality, of it having a chance. Trapped in a house for weeks, most animals have no chance at all.

Having enough food and water available for the animal for many days is an option, and a means of escape is another, but loyal dogs might simply die awaiting your return. So have a plan for your pets or accept their loss.

If you decide to keep your pet with you, be aware that your stress becomes an animal's stress, and they might act differently. They also might have a tendency to take off, endangering you and your family if you stay to find them or go out in the storm looking. You need to tell your children to keep the pet inside, and yet you do not want to cause panic if they do get away. A balance can be reached here—rather than shouting at your kids if the dog, cat, or horse gets free of their grasp and leaving them thinking they allowed the pet to die, tell your kids (which might be the truth or a white lie) that animals have instincts, and they've got a chance to make it on their own.

Chapter 7
Site Security

If you will be using your home as a survival retreat, site security is obviously essential. To understand site security, you need to understand the basics by asking yourself a few questions:

1. What are you trying to protect?
2. What is your likely threat?
3. What can be done with materials on hand?
4. What else is needed?
5. Why aren't you fixing it now?

The answers to these questions will provide you with guidelines on how to begin.

SECURITY IN YOUR HOME

Excellent, detailed books focused solely on home security are available from Paladin Press. For shoestring survivalism, the focus is on what can be done inexpensively.

Locking your doors, latching your windows, maintaining accountability of all keys, controlling access to your home, installing outside lighting, and having planned responses to security problems are essential and part of day-to-day survivalism. These steps are self-explanatory and easy to complete. Just ensuring that you've locked your doors, knowing who has access to your home, and briefing your children on how to respond to emergencies will increase your home security considerably.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

Shifting from "simply doing things" to developing a survivalism mind-set helps with decision making and planning. Let's look at some of the essentials of home security through the prism of shoestring survivalism.

Phones

We need our communications, and today, that invariably means a cell phone. Lives can be saved by not having to physically check on people; with the push of a few buttons, I can find out in seconds if everyone is all right and convey plans from most anywhere. Cell phone service may be the only communications available during an emergency, so it makes sense to ensure your phone will always be ready. Buy a car charger, a backup power unit, and/or a hand-crank charger, and make sure your service plan is adequate and up to date. This goes for all phones in the family. It's a good idea to put your cell phone and charger in your bedroom in case someone unhooks a house phone or cuts your line to disable your ability to get help.

When your contract comes up, carefully reevaluate the best plan for you and your family. Some people benefit by having a lot of minutes, but others find it a huge advantage to buy "disposable" or prepaid phones where you load minutes as needed. This is great if you seldom use your phone or wish to remain as much off the grid as possible. You can pick up these phones at Radio Shack or most any department store with an electronics department, and the cards to recharge their minutes can be found hanging on racks at Wal-Mart, convenience stores, and even grocery stores. You don't have to give your real name and address in most cases, and the costs are specifically managed by you.

Another consideration is second phones. Oftentimes a second free phone is offered by phone companies, and it can be quite handy for convenience and savings. Coordinating with friends and family members to go with the same service saves money and maintains a better connection. My cell phone is part of a family plan, which allows me to call other users inexpensively. The extra phone costs me nothing, and the plan costs little more than one that didn't offer the phone.

Most cordless phones are worthless during a power outage. Old, cord-equipped phones on the other hand, frequently work when your cordless won't, and they might still be available for a few dollars at garage sales and other places, or you might have one stashed in the basement. It's a good idea to keep one handy that you know will work without power.

But check the cord phone, too. Some have radios, alarm clocks, and other gadgets embedded in them, and they're as useless as cordless phones when the power dies.

Locks

Too often predators gain entry by simply going through an open door or window, so sturdy deadbolts on outside doors and latches on windows are useless unless everyone uses them. Windows can be further hardened by drilling a 5/32-inch hole at a slight downward angle through the lower sash and halfway into the upper sash and inserting a nail. This technique provides additional security at no cost and is easy to do.

Door locks inside a house can be defeated by a small screwdriver, but second locks can be added to interior doors. Putting a dead bolt in an internal door might seem foolish since most doors inside a house aren't solid core; however, someone would have to defeat the lock to get past the door, and that would provide a wake-up and warning to anyone sleeping in the room, especially when the door has been reinforced internally or is a solid door.

While some experts state that a board or metal track in a sliding patio door won't provide much security because the glass can be broken, and frequently the board can be worked out with a long slender object, the one pictured here held up to a break-in attempt. Whoever attempted to gain entry either didn't wish to make the noise of breaking the glass or didn't have the immediate means or desire to do so. Painting or selecting a block that matches the track buys time, as the would-be intruder might

A deadbolt on a hollow-core interior door provides only seconds more physical security but vital *noise* security (enough to wake up and grab your firearm). Instead of slipping the lock open with a credit card or screwdriver, the door must be busted. You'll hear the noise and know where to aim.

not see it before attempting to open the door. The criminal will waste time working on the latch rather than understanding what is holding up the door. The wood costs nothing, and the black paint was available.

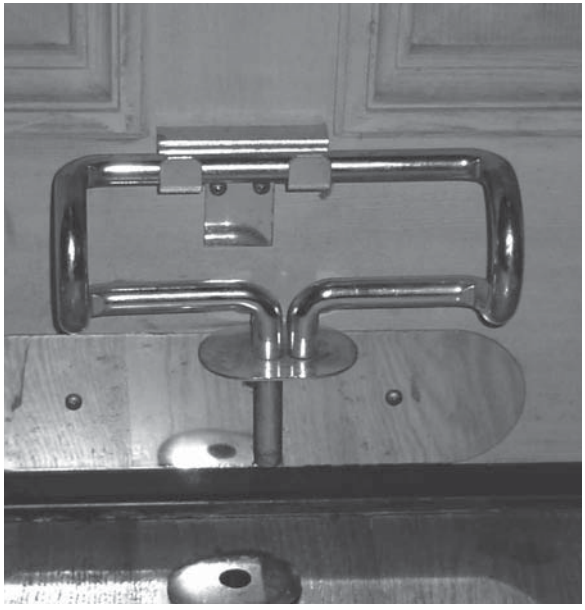
A variety of door blocks are available that provide security against anything but a powerfully forced entry. The photos here show an old, purpose-made unit for securing the door, but one doesn't need a store-purchased device like this; it might simply be done with a section of pipe or stout dowel and a collar fit in a hole drilled in the floor.

A piece of wood blocking the track on a sliding glass door to backup the regular handle lock. Note how the black paint helps the wood blend into the surroundings.

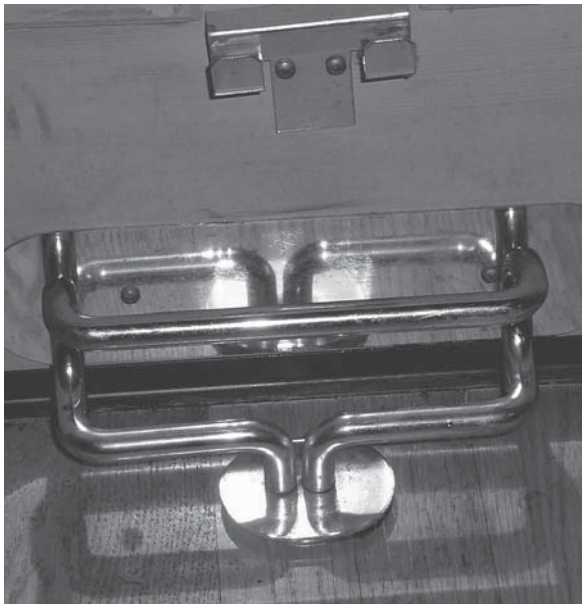
Board out of place to show how to block sliding doors and windows.

A surprisingly inexpensive and loud alarm system for doors can be found in home supply outlets like Home Depot and even in dollar stores. The alarm activates with a piercing sound whenever the magnetized portion is moved away from the alarm when it's switched on. Strategically placed, they can provide warning that a break in your security took place, and they require no external electricity.

Here is a cheap trick for quickly determining whether someone has entered your home when you're looking down a hallway, downstairs, or from the door after entering the premises.



Door block. You can improvise this device with galvanized pipe and sheet metal.



Door block in place. You can also position it so the door can be partially open.

What you do is put something that is easily seen (from inside the house only) that would tempt a thief or attract attention. Whether it's a $5 bill folded over several $1s, a purse, old cell phone, obsolete video camera, or other item, it should be something that's likely to be picked up by a thief. If you come home and notice immediately that your staged bundle of money, visible only from inside the door and left alone by family members, is missing, there is a problem. While it's not a foolproof method, as the item conceivably could be overlooked or a household member could move it inadvertently, it's still cheap and easy to

One of the best deals at the dollar stores: an alarm system with batteries that alerts you when a door or window is opened. Simple to install and use.

Place bait items just inside your front door so that they can't be seen from the outside, but any intruder will see them. An inactive cell phone, a throwaway wallet, some money, and old, useless keys work well as bait and serve two purposes. If you open the door and see them gone, back out and call the police. A more pensive thief will see the items and believe that someone is home—matched with a television or radio playing in a locked bedroom, they might leave, not wanting to get caught.

do. You can also provide a degree of in-home security by rigging conspicuous, tempting items to an inexpensive magnetic alarm. If it's moved, the alarm will give warning of a possible intruder.

By simply positioning furniture strategically, entry to a room can be restricted or slowed. Again, this costs nothing using what's on hand, and it'll buy time for the homeowner to become alert and retrieve a weapon. An item like a chair can be moved into position each night and easily removed from the inside in the event of an emergency.

You can suspend treble hooks from various lengths of fishing line across doorways and entranceways when a threat is anticipated. This will definitely slow most people and provide you with a noisy warning of someone's presence, especially if you attach any form of improvised alarms to the hooks, like small bells. However, as with all booby traps, what works on others

Blocking a door with moveable furniture can slow an intruder for a few critical and noisy seconds while you regain your wits and reach for your pistol. These items can be removed in seconds each morning or in an emergency.

works on you. And don't forget to remove them before you have company. You don't want to become known as the neighborhood weirdo with hooks hanging from the ceiling! (For the reason why, see Chapter 13.)

A large, bright, and shiny hook used for illustration purposes. A better employment would be several dark hooks against a busy background. This practice works best when night intrusion or rapid entry is anticipated. Hooks should be placed at various levels to catch an adult male in the face.

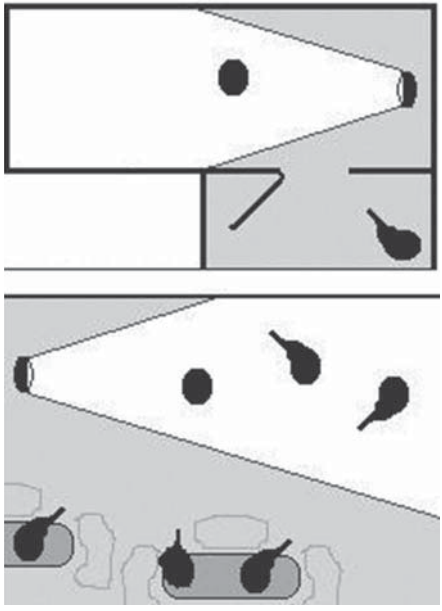
OUTDOOR
WIRELESS
Remote Control
WITH KEY CHAIN TRANSMITTER
• Average operational range greater than 50ft. (up to 100 ft.)*
• Perfect for landscape, holiday and security lighting
• Accepts 3-prong grounded plugs

I use a remote-control indoor/outdoor switch for my light setup.

LIGHTS

An inexpensive and powerful tool is the remote switch from GE, which turns on and off anything you can plug in. Obvious use is for illuminating a room or even a good part of the house from outside or inside without having to enter the room. The devices run roughly $5.99 to $9.99 and can be purchased in hardware stores.

One good thing about defending your home is that you know and own the territory and you can set up your security



Using a remote switch, you don't endanger yourself by being near the light, which might draw fire, and you can observe intruders with them illuminated and you in the darkness.

conditions in advance. The rig in my house consists of a halogen light, which can be set up when needed or prepositioned in a strategic point, combined with a GE remote control. For fewer than $20, you can flood a zone with blinding light at the flip of a remote switch. As light might draw fire, you can be off to the side with your threat blinded, reacting to the light, and brightly illuminated. Affixing the remote switch to the forestock of a shotgun or rifle would allow a proper stock weld to be assumed prior to flipping the switch.

Solar-powered motion-sensitive lights for perimeter security outside are ideal for disaster aftermaths because they don't require electricity to run. Shoestring survival upside: they don't require an electrician to install. Shoestring survival downside: $80 for the unit shown in the photo. However, the security they provide is invaluable to your site security.

Outdoor lights are an imperative part of site security. This motion-activated, solar-powered exterior light was picked up at Lowe's. It's a little pricy at $80, but you save money by not having to hire an electrician to install it (all it takes is a ladder and screwdriver).

Remote switch kit, bright work light, and shotgun make up a powerful security package.

PROTECTING AGAINST LOOTERS

In law enforcement, the notion of "presence" as a deterrent works to a great extent. We are disinclined to speed if we see the state patrol on the road, for example. Advertising that you are willing to defend your location works well when you move from low-key to blatant survivalism, but you *must* be capable and willing to do so, and do so only when it's evident the system is failing. If the police still regularly patrol your area after the disaster, *you* are the problem with your "I shoot looters" signs. Save these steps for a Katrina-level situation, where site security falls in the hands of armed, determined citizens.

Effectively stopping looters isn't about silently lying in wait and shooting them when they enter your property but rather having a conspicuous presence so they know that the area remains occupied and is contested and their activities could cost them their lives. This is best done in the form of well-placed warning signs, like the ones you often see in the news after riots

and natural disasters. While it makes for great photographs to see some pissed-off middle-aged guy with a beer belly standing on his porch with a pump shotgun, let your advertising do your warning for you.

One effective means of letting potential looters know that you're willing to defend your location is to post warning signs *before* they get into your area. Ever seen anyone advertising a big garage sale? They begin way out from where the sale is, and they have either a color sticker or tape or something that identifies it as being related to that same sale. Well, when it's safe to do so in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, start posting signs that get across the fact that you don't stand by for looters. Simple engineering tape, the same paper plate signs—anything that's consistent works. The message on the signs should be short and impossible to misunderstand. "We shoot looters" about says it all (and indicates there's more than one of you, even if there isn't), but veiled threats like, "Keep moving if you don't live here" work well, too. You establish presence without immediate personal risk because your signs rather than you confront the potential looters.

It's not cost-effective to buy and stockpile materials for signs, and it won't be so easy to secure in the aftermath of a disaster. You might be able to justify keeping a jug of paint or some spray paint cans around, because it can also be used to make signs that provide information to rescuers, neighbors, friends, or family members.

Here's a cheap trick for site security: match that sign up with lengths of red duct tape as a makeshift "do not cross" fence. It's easier to roll out duct tape than make scores of signs, and it enables you to mark your territory and give fair warning. If you're coordinated with neighbors, you might suggest they place colored tape on their antennas if the roads are working so you know instantly it's a neighbor's car approaching—but you check anyway.

Another inexpensive technique that could discourage unwanted intruders is to put up some warning barrier tape that advertises a biohazard or other danger in the area. Combine it with realistic-looking signs and perhaps even forms in document protectors suggesting the presence of a hazard and you have an effective deterrent for most. You can get barrier tape from the big

warehouse stores and hazard signs from medical and industrial supply sites. You probably should get the stuff down when the authorities come and the threat is diminished so they don't have to go looking for some biohazard that doesn't exist.

One technique that I've never seen applied and which might have some moral and legal ramifications is to mark clearly on the street outside of the homes of known antigunners, "Gun-free home here." This is so the looters don't go after anyone who is willing to defend their stuff, and you're giving the antigunner an opportunity to walk the walk. Why should the antigunners benefit from the protection of gun owners when the chips are down?

Chapter 8
Guns on a Budget

First and foremost in my budget survivalism plan comes firearms and ammunition, because the notion of being a member of a free people and having the capacity to protect myself and my family means a lot to me. The police can't be everywhere, and in a crisis they won't be around for most of us. Survivalism is about managing your own situations and protecting your family yourself, so firearms represent preparedness and survival and preserving your options.

In the aftermath of Katrina, I strongly recommend that firearms and ammunition don't become second or thirds to food and water in your survival preparation. Perhaps they should be the priority, as you're likely to have access to some food and water. Those items might even be given to you by relief agencies eventually, but getting firearms legally after a disaster begins might be impossible. You also won't be considering food and water when you hear a window broken or a

door kicked open in the middle of the night. In a major collapse of order, your food and water belongs to whoever discovers it and takes it.

Make no mistake about it: we are a violent species, and we will take what we need by force. And there are many individuals who will take advantage of the disorder and do what they can when they can get away with it. Rapes and murders have occurred in the midst of every major disaster, from the Johnstown Flood to the Chicago Fire to the San Francisco Quake to the Galveston Hurricane to the New Orleans levee breaks. Even if you're not willing to defend yourself or believe that you're not capable of doing so, don't dismiss this section of the book.

I strongly recommend that you obtain a firearm, learn to use it properly on the range, and store it safely away from the hands of children but where you can get it. Even if you don't wish to use one, you can preserve your option for self-defense while sacrificing little of the life you want to lead. If you have others dependent upon you for protection and you smugly decide to avoid firearms for personal reasons, you have selfishly and naively condemned your loved ones, and it is your fault if something bad happens to them that you could have prevented.

Firearms, ammunition, and accessories might seem prohibitively expensive, but they are necessary, and they aren't as expensive or difficult to obtain as you might believe.

Other books on survival discuss the wide range of sophisticated and expensive firearms and detailed concepts regarding such things as caliber standardization, but that is beyond the scope of this book. We're talking shoestring survivalism, so let's start with the cheapest guns around: the ones you might already have.

ODDS ARE, YOU HAVE WHAT YOU NEED . . . OR YOU CAN GET IT

Before you commence buying firearms solely for survivalism, consider what you have on hand or can obtain that can be inexpensively fed, easily maintained, and accurately shot. Grandpa's revolver in the dresser, your father-in-law's old hunting gun in your closet, or any other gun you already own might be enough to fill your needs, or at least be a good start.

While I'd love to provide a chapter on what I've learned from over 20 years of gun buying and swapping, it's been better said in *The Blue Book of Gun Values,* which you can find in the library. It's not essential that you get the most recent copy, just one recent enough to get a grasp of what things are worth these days. This classic reference clearly explains how to determine firearm values and grade.

So, with millions of guns in private hands nationwide, odds are you have at least something in the house or you can easily acquire one from a relative or friend. Even if you don't think you have a gun around, you might check your house thoroughly. A friend of mine told me that he helped an elderly lady clean out her attic, and they were both stunned to find an old shotgun and a war trophy Arisaka rifle in usable condition. The woman figured they belonged to her long deceased son and had been gathering dust for decades, but they were working firearms, and they were free. Another man showed me a .25-20 Winchester found in a relative's home and given to him, a battered but shootable relic. By chance and the unpredictable transfers of the U.S. Army, he'd found himself stationed at Fort Drum in upstate New York, and a gun shop right outside the gate had .25-20 ammunition available. For the cost of a box of rounds, he quickly had a means of defending his family. I knew another person who was given a much abused Marlin rifle that languished in a closet for years. Phil repaired it, cleaned it up, and handed it over to his brother just days before that man dropped a whitetail with it during his first hunting trip.

The point is that rifles, shotguns, and pistols by the thousands rest in drawers, trunks, closets, spare rooms, garages, and attics throughout this country. Some are gems and shouldn't be used at all, being better retained as heirlooms or sold or traded for more practical firearms. (Again, the *Blue Book of Gun Values* will help you determine what you have and its value.) Many firearms are niche weapons that aren't very valuable in some contexts but are fine for survivalism and home defense. For example, you might find an old .38 target pistol with a 6-inch barrel. This handgun would not be the best for concealed carry, but it's accurate and might actually be better for many shooters for home defense than a 4-inch revolver.

If it's a decent, working firearm bigger than a pocket pistol, and ammunition is available, you've started your survivalist's arsenal.

But assuming you need more . . .

WHAT YOU NEED

You need at least one firearm *that is legal in your area,* shoots accurately, and works for the anticipated circumstances of your survivalist scenarios. It doesn't need to be an expensive firearm, and as a budget survivalist, protection is more important than hunting. You need ammunition for it . . . quite a bit of ammunition, but at least a few boxes beyond what you use for practice. (For this reason, when considering buying a firearm, notice ammunition prices for it as well.) You need a place or means to secure the gun, and you need to become familiar with it and you need to practice with it.

Unless you're very familiar with your firearm, you should get a manual and actually read it. In this age of the Internet, many gun manuals are downloadable for free. Be sure to print out a copy. If the power goes out, the manual does you no good if it's sitting inaccessible in the bowels of a blacked-out computer.

If you have a firearm, you have the responsibility to learn how to operate it safely and effectively. You can fall back upon your training if you've had any; otherwise, you need to find a

This is an inexpensive survival arsenal (rifle, shotgun, handgun), but near top end for a shoestringer.

qualified instructor. The National Rifle Association runs classes for novice shooters that are less expensive to attend than any of the big-name tactical shooting schools around the country, and state-run hunter safety courses will teach the very basics of safe gun handling for the rank beginner. Local gun clubs sponsor events that can provide needed instruction and access to a shooting range, and they might even let you use their firearms so you can become familiar enough to develop preferences.

Another option is to ask friends and acquaintances for assistance. Many gun owners are friendly and quite eager to welcome new shooters into the fold. While you might not be best buddies with Bob, if he's a good sort and appears to be a smart, safe fellow, he might be a good person to approach when you want to learn about firearms and safety, or he might know someone who is a better trainer. I once I took a young woman out to the range when she expressed an interest in shooting and was shocked when others who heard about our sessions wanted to learn as well.

I have been unable to find weapons instructors who specifically teach use-of-force for civilians facing civil disorder. If you're in the same boat, go to your state's website, click on the laws, enter keywords "self-defense" or "justifiable homicide," and know rather then guess what your rights and responsibilities are, *especially* if you think you know or were told by someone who said he knew.

Old, very inexpensive firearms that could work for shoestring survivalism.

It's essential that you know when you are permitted to shoot in self-defense, even when you might assume the chaos is so bad that your actions can only be judged amid that chaos. Too often a prosecutor might leisurely build a case against a shooter and present it to a jury in the staid, comfortable environment of a courthouse, where your caution and concerns won't be as easily conveyed as the horror expressed by those who say the person you shot kicking in your front door holding a knife was "just a boy, getting his life together." Doing legal research on the Internet is not the same thing as getting a qualified legal opinion, but it's free, making it an inexpensive start to your legal education in these matters.

That said, if someone is harming you and yours, you're going to shoot to stop the actions of that threatening individual—and that's what you're going to make as a statement to the authorities, but only *after* you lawyer up, assuming order is restored. Unbelievably, people actually allow themselves to be harmed and even killed, sometimes along with their family members, because they're worried about getting in trouble if they defend themselves!

The right to self-defense is never denied.

Doing it legally is where the problem arises.

Look up your local and state laws before you are ever forced to defend yourself with a firearm.

SPECIFIC WEAPONS AND THEIR ROLES

A brief description of some firearms of interest to survivalists is helpful. As this book is about shoestring survivalism, inexpensive guns are the focus.

.22 Rifles

A good .22 rifle is the most useful firearm a budget survivalist owns, and it's a good starting point, but it suffers from limitations. It's also one of the least expensive firearms, and one that a budget survivalist is most likely to have on hand.

The .22 Long Rifle (LR) is a common and inexpensive cartridge. You can pick up a box of 50 rounds for about a buck or less when on sale, sometimes lower if bought in quantity. Thou-

sands of rounds of .22 LR can be purchased, stockpiled, and stored inexpensively and with little effort and space.

Becoming a great shot with a .22 is easy. The mild recoil makes for forgiving shooting, and all-day sessions are possible with little strain and expense. The more expensive high-velocity hollowpoint .22s are wicked rounds when it comes to hitting game, as they sometimes do unexpected things when they enter and hit bone.

The .22 can be used for pest control and hunting small- and medium-size game as well as some larger animals such as deer with proper shot placement—given a crisis. Although debatable, the right .22 rifle paired with the right ammunition can be used effectively for home defense and even for very specialized tactical applications for which one might not dare use more potent, heavier, and scarcer rounds. If you watch enough *Forensic Files*, it's clear that while firearms experts and enthusiasts consider the .22 as less than viable for a human-size target, criminals have no such inclination, and they kill effectively and often with that caliber. However, most people consider the .22 unsatisfactory for self-defense.

I think the .22 can be used defensively if the right weapon is used by a skilled shooter. Back in the 1980s, I remember snickering at the individuals who showed up at the range with

Ruger 10/22, modified inexpensively with a Tasco scope, imported see-through scope base, Butler Creek stock, and Wal-Mart pencil case (cost: $1) for extra magazine.

maxed-out Ruger 10/22s and AR-7s. They would pull out their accessory-laden creations with folding stocks, flash suppressors, and "banana" clips. Some had mounted expensive, low-power scopes in what many of us thought were strange locations (they appeared too far forward). Among those we saw with these .22 rifles in "combat configuration" were kids, schmucks, and wannabes who couldn't afford the then "survival standard" of the Ruger Mini-14. However, others had obviously thought things out and possessed decent systems. They were the quiet fellows who ignored those who thought they knew better, and they kept tinkering and learning.

If you don't want to go through the time and expense to customize a 10/22 or AR-7, you can pick up a used Glenfield Marlin bolt-action rifle, which is very accurate with its microgroove barrel and long barrel length, for between $30 to $60 dollars. Other options are new and old Remington autoloaders—excellent inexpensive rifles, fuller sized than a Ruger 10/22, that are underrated by most observers.

Centerfire Rifles

Jeff Cooper, gun guru extraordinaire, aptly explains in his book, *The Art of the Rifle,* that the rifle, among all other firearms, is essential to ensuring our liberty. Only the rifle among the weapons available to the public has the capacity to ensure freedom for a freedom-loving people when engaging sophisticated

Higher-end centerfire rifles for shoestring survivalism—a folding-stock AK and a Mini 14 GB.

enemies. Darn few of us want, need, or can obtain a general-purpose machine gun, grenade launcher, or other modern battlefield weapons, but we can get a rifle and become proficient with it, even in the most repressive areas of this country. A rifle can be employed from less than a meter to incredibly long ranges, and in the survivalism sense, the rifle's primary purpose is self-defense, followed by hunting.

Favorite rifles for survival have changed over the years, and what might not be in vogue now could still be useful or something to trade off for something better. Currently, some survivalists favor the AR family of rifles (civilian semiautomatic versions of the military M16), while others prefer the SKS, which is an inexpensive, rugged, reliable semiautomatic military rifle. Not too long ago, the Mini-14 was the weapon of choice for survivalists—not everyone had one, it might not have been the best, and it couldn't do everything, but enough people owned them to make others want them. Variations of the Winchester lever actions also held that role in survivalist circles. Today it's the AR or SKS, but the Mini-14s, Ruger Ranch Rifles, and other old favorites continue as primary and secondary rifles among the preparedness crowd.

Inexpensive rifles suitable for survivalism crop up all the time if you keep your eyes and ears open. The first budget survival option I remember was around winter 1983, when I heard about a glut of beater but decent M1 carbines from a lot of 1,500 that came on the market for $75 a unit, with magazines, magazine pouch, cleaning kit, oiler, sling, *and ammo.* M1A1s came with 30-round magazines and were a mere $125, each cherry picked! Those fortunate enough to pick up an excellent M1 carbine back then might have a gem now. Many survivalists favored M1 carbines, but then and now, folks found the .30-caliber round anemic, mostly based on anecdotal evidence. However, new, effective rounds are available for this old weapon.

Another firearm that tempted survivalists sold dirt-cheap in the mid-80s, dried up, and eventually became higher priced. The ugly, clunky Japanese bolt-action rifles were very inexpensive; I recall an ad in *Shotgun News* offered two rifles and a carbine "free" for shipping costs if one bought cases of old, corroded rounds. I believe bayonets were provided as well. The rifles ran

from $30 to $60 for specimens in average condition, higher for specific models and ones with markings.

At the time I remember some survivalists discussing whether to go in on purchasing the sets, divvying up the ammo, and putting the stuff away, just in case. Some probably did. While those rifles might have been considered junk, like the M1 carbines, someone out there collects them, making them excellent candidates for sale or trade at the least.

So why am I writing about World War II rifles and how perceptions and utility change? Any survival literature that talks about specific firearm models and availability in a manner useful to a contemporary reader becomes dated over the decades as gun makers and, more commonly, accessory providers close, new weapons are developed, new or different calibers find favor or are made available, trends shift, and laws change. This is especially true with rifles and pistols, and I know as I write this that some already consider ARs in .223 Remington obsolete (others consider it obsolete only in 62 grain).

At that risk of becoming dated over the decades, I'll state that today we have some fantastic options that are cheap, good bargains.

Our standards for a rifle for budget preparedness are minimal. We need a rifle fed by magazine or stripper clip, as it's hard to load individual rounds when it's really cold or while in a panic. The firearm must be accurate for a few hundred meters or yards, with readily available ammunition that can do the job. And it must be rugged enough to withstand tough field conditions. This often means military models, so let's start there.

The Mosin-Nagants are widely available and inexpensive. They are heavy, bolt-action rifles and carbines that shoot the potent 7.62x54mm R. I picked up two M44s—short-barreled Mosin-Nagants with side-folding bayonets, slings, pouches, cleaning rods, in good condition—for $49 each plus tax at Big 5 Sporting Goods years ago. They're still low in price, but they won't be forever. The rifles are stout, solidly built, and ugly. They're also very accurate and tough. Ammunition is available at gun shows and inexpensive, especially considering that we're talking about a full rifle cartridge. It's even available inexpensively from Cheaperthandirt.com and other online vendors. Therefore, for $150, a shoestring survivalist can pick up a rifle

and enough ammo to stockpile and become very familiar with his primary defensive and hunting firearm. For $200, spent at about $50 a month, he can have a rifle, a stockpile of rounds, and become not only familiar but proficient!

A step above these ugly brutes are the 8mm Mausers. Excellent rifles but becoming more expensive, they worked well enough during World War II. While they are still relatively inexpensive, effective rifles, the surplus ammunition is drying up, and what remains is growing expensive.

Another great former military weapon that's becoming less available cheaply is the selection of Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifles

All of these firearms are examples of good shoestring survival weapons: (left to right) Mosin carbine, sporterized Lee-Enfield, Winchester '94, Yugo M48 Mauser, and SKS.

in various configurations, ranging from pristine to battered "sporterized" versions. I've picked up a shooter with cutdown stocks and professionally applied civilian sights for $60 that any survivalist might find handy, but availability of surplus ammunition is irregular.

Moving up to what formerly cost less than $100 and now runs a bit more is a rifle any survivalist, whether the fully kitted 20-year practitioner or the newbie budget survivalist, must consider—the SKS. The SKS is an excellent option, providing the ammo remains readily available. A robust semiauto rifle, it is accurate to a few hundred yards, and the ammunition, whether ball, softpoint, or hollowpoint, is inexpensive enough that stockpiling and practice is easily managed. The rifles are durable and tough, and they can maintain some collector value if they're the ones with the folding bayonet. While some people like to change the stocks and add detachable magazines, scope bases, folding bipods, and other accessories on their SKSs, it's cheaper to buy a used SKS that someone has already customized.

An option that a budget survivalist might consider that moves far beyond the arbitrary $200 mark is obtaining some firepower in the form of AK clones in semiautomatic. The law regarding imported parts (922R) is still in effect despite the sunset of the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994, so if you buy a secondhand one with a folding stock, make sure it contains enough American-made parts, or better yet, get a fixed-stock American-made one for under $400 and you're getting something more effective. Contrary to what many American shooters believe, an AK can actually possess some accuracy. As with any rifled long arm, quality range time and skilled shooting can improve your accuracy, and just as with the SKS, the ammo is still relatively inexpensive.

The examples presented above are interesting, reliable possibilities for a military centerfire rifle, just as the dirt cheap M98K Mausers and Arisaka rifles were during earlier times. But purely civilian options always exist and might be more common choices for shoestring survivalists, as they can do double duty for hunting and will not attract stares from worried neighbors.

Perhaps the most common single model found in homes throughout the United States is the Winchester Model 94. A wide variety of configurations exist, and calibers include .30-30 Winchester (.30 WCF), .357 Magnum, and .44 Magnum. These lever

actions are durable, reliable, and can be accurate at shorter ranges. Some people favor the "pre-64s" (models made before Winchester changed manufacturing procedures in 1964 in order to make the rifle less expensive to make), which are said to be slicker and tighter and can be identified by a screw at the base of the lever. Those pre-64s can also be very beat-up guns since they've been banging around for four decades or more. Marlin lever actions are said to be better, and they generally command a higher price for equivalent condition, but normally they're well beyond the $200 limit even used.

WHERE TO FIND BUDGET GUNS

Places to find inexpensive firearms include gun shows, classified ads, websites (e.g., gunbroker.com), and estate and garage sales. If you see a lot of hunting- and firearms-related items at a garage sale, ask the man present if he has a firearm he'd like to sell. That might be the nudge he was looking for. I personally didn't like the times I've bought and sold firearms through want ads. I certainly don't want anyone coming to my home and scoping out the place, especially not someone buying guns, so that means meeting in public parking lots, which isn't a great experience either. I prefer buying or selling a firearm at a gun show, with hundreds of people present and all firearms cable-tied for safety.

Another option is to quietly ask a mature friend who is a hunter about what you should get. Just tell them you wish to be discreet because you don't want people knowing about your business. If he's mature, he'll understand. He might know someone who has a good deal or who can kick loose something that will work. You'll be surprised how much some shooters are willing to help. I've sold firearms at reasonable prices to young men who felt the need to protect their families but didn't have a lot of money. Some deals actually hurt me financially, but I didn't want to see a family go without defense. I don't think I'm unique.

You might want to buy a firearm without help for any of several reasons. If so, decide how much you're willing to spend, decide what type of firearm you wish to purchase for what role, and go to the library and check out the *Blue Book of Gun Values.* Just about every library has one, and if they don't, ask them to order it. If you think even that draws too much attention, buy an old copy in a used bookstore with cash. Then go shopping through any of the sources mentioned above for the guns on your list.

An in-depth discussion on evaluating used firearms is beyond the scope of this book, but you'll find solid advice in the *Blue Book,* or do an Internet search for "buying used guns" as a jumping-off point. Just remember that firearms enthusiasts are, well, enthusiastic, and they have strong opinions about what constitutes an acceptable gun in good working condition. If you're new to the game, you'll have to rely on your research and instincts to determine whether you're being fed a line of bull.

Shoestring Survivalism

Some survivalists opt for an interesting alternative in the excellent "subrifles." An individual who I'll refer to by his screen name of "ForrestDweller" introduced me to the term. Just as a submachine gun is an automatic weapon that uses pistol cartridges, the 9mm, .40, and .45 semiautomatic carbines are subrifles. Hi-Point carbines are good examples—stout, nine-shot long arms firing 9mm and .40 in a semi-bullpup configuration (i.e., the magazine well is in the pistol grip). Many envision their survival shooting as being within short ranges and for limited encounters and like the commonality of caliber with their handguns, so they seek this option. While gun snobs might discount a semiauto carbine that runs from $189 to $229 new, owners inform me that they're reliable weapons and accurate within 150 yards. If limited to a 10-round, magazine-fed weapon running under $200, I'd prefer a 7.62x39mm rifle like an SKS over a 9mm Parabellum or .40 Smith & Wesson carbine. However, if a subrifle meets your standards, you find it reliable, and, most importantly, you have confidence in the weapon, it's an option for you.

The bottom line is this: whatever rifle you have should (1) work, (2) be safe, (3) be legal in your area, and (4) have a reliable ammunition source.

Shotguns

Shotguns, particularly pumps and double barrels, are old standbys for confronting civil disorder. If you see an old photograph of prison guards, bank guards, cowboys, or any such individual carrying a shotgun, it conveys a sense of seriousness that isn't there with rifles and pistols.

Modern photographs of individuals holding pump shotguns or, more frequently, long-barreled hunting shotguns conscripted for home defense, are common following any disaster in the United States. Not only are shotguns readily available and often inexpensive, they're intimidating and they're effective. Many smart-assed young men have been permanently quieted by mean old men with shotguns.

Shotguns are very common in the United States, with 12-gauge pumps being the most common. There are also double-barrel, over-under, and semiautomatic designs, and even shotguns in combination with a rifle above the shotgun barrel

for the best value considering cost, actual intimidation, and reliability. But you're best off with a pump.

Long-barreled hunting shotguns have been used successfully for defense, as often they're the only thing available, or the most effective available choice, but some people want something handier and easier to bring into action, which means a short-barreled "riot" or police-type shotgun. But you can get considerable range out of their long-barreled cousins, and you might be impressed with what they can do and the fact they're not as unwieldy as you might believe. If you have a goose or field gun with a barrel 26 inches or longer, don't feel under armed—just make sure you've got room to swing it around.

Although the longer-barreled shotguns will work for you, they're just not as handy, so you might prefer a pump-action riot or self-defense shotgun. You can pick up short-barreled police Mossbergs, Remingtons, and Winchesters, used, in decent condition, for under $200 when a department surpluses them, but there are easier and less expensive ways to acquire a good home-defense shotgun. There are many models out there that have become obsolete for their owners because they can't handle newer steel shot or for other reasons, and those guns can be picked up inexpensively.

Grab-and-go pistol and ammo cache.

Sidearms

Do you need a sidearm for survivalism? While many survivalists assume that they're needed, others argue that, given budget limitations, it doesn't make much sense to buy a $500 pistol when a $200 rifle would be more capable, harder hitting, and longer range. Perhaps a reliable, light carbine would be a better option than a pistol.

However, there are many good reasons to own a sidearm. A pistol is more likely to be worn when people become complacent and long guns are left behind. Pistols remain concealable and, unlike a carbine, can fit in almost any bug-out bag. A pistol can be worn in a holster while active (though not as easily as some think), and anyone who has done labor while having a rifle slung or resting beside the work site knows it's not easily managed. A pistol is also a more convenient and safer means of ensuring security while inside a perceived "safe area" such as within the confines of a perimeter, where it would be a pain and dangerous to be lugging around loaded rifles. Most importantly, even if you have the most reliable long arm in the world, a pistol satisfies an essential principle of survivalism—having a backup. A sidearm is a better backup weapon to a jammed or empty long arm than a knife.

If you're living in some oppressive area where you're not allowed to carry concealed weapons, it might be better to put your money into a rifle. On the other hand, the best firearm is the one

All of these handguns cost about $150 or less.

that's there when you need it, and one on your hip is more likely to be there than one left in a gun safe at home. Preparedness is about preserving options in every aspect of your survival plans, so get a pistol.

Inexpensive Handguns

As with discussions regarding low-cost, good-value rifles, recommendations on purchasing specific models or even types of handguns to meet the needs of shoestring survivalism would date this book quickly. During just the writing of this book, trends, availability, and prices changed. The information provided below is intended to be helpful beyond these factors.

A number of handguns have been recommended for budget preparedness in the past. Examples include break-open revolvers (which are still inexpensive), surplus military P-38s and Lugers (which are expensive now and are likely to remain so), imported Eastern European military and paramilitary semiautomatics, and a glut of Mauser handguns that vanished too fast. I've picked up used police revolvers as departments transitioned to semiautos, and I've been tempted by the ever-present Glocks dumped by police departments in favor of other models.

Some consider the old police revolvers to be obsolete because .38 is seen as a marginal caliber. However, many of us formed our opinions (or more likely parroted the opinion) that .38 Special is inadequate before the newer projectiles and higher-tech hollowpoints became common. Many old .38 Special revolvers are out there, and they are adequate for self-defense, but be careful—if you have an older pistol that's questionable, then perhaps it's better to spend a bit more money and get something else. Don't shoot a lot of .38 Special +P ammo in any .38 revolver that's not marked +P.

The inexpensive pistol market is too mercurial to pin down, as it changes with whatever great deal the distributors receive. One could consider the very inexpensive Chinese-made Tokarov pistols in either 7.62x 25mm or 9x19mm, some with double-column magazines, the Markarovs in 9x18 and .380s, the Norinco .45s, various CZs, and the Walther knockoffs, but the availability changes. Those are all decent pistols at normally decent prices in the used market, with the exception of the Norincos,

which have actually gained value. If you want a general rule, go for a reliable, Commie-made weapon in a major caliber. Be aware that the fit and finish isn't as fine as those made in Western Europe and the United States in most cases, but these pistols are often very inexpensive, easily disassembled, and tougher than you.

As a SIG-, Browning-, and Colt-carrying gun owner, it will surprise my friends that I'll suggest a Hi-Point pistol for a budget survivalist. These are the handguns disparagingly called "Ghetto Glocks" because that's where they are frequently seen, and "Brick Glocks" because supposedly they're as unwieldy and as inaccurate as a brick. However, they do work and can hit, and for a few hundred dollars, a person wishing to defend his family can obtain a .45, .40, or 9mm that's reliable, especially with ball ammunition. I reconsidered them after seeing several police magazines put their reputations on the line with articles that commended these inexpensive blowback pistols for those with limited budgets in need of a good defensive gun.

While the .22 rifle is necessary, the .22 pistol might merely be optional. Ruger, Browning, and Smith & Wesson make pistols in .22 LR that are handy, accurate, and cost within a few hundred dollars used, often including a holster and extra magazines. I've seen used revolvers in .22 that didn't work, both single and double action, but I've not seen a used Ruger or Browning .22 auto that didn't work or couldn't be fixed, although odds are there are some out there. If you already have a .22 pistol like a Ruger Mark anything, then fantastic—it is useful in survival situations, especially when hunting with a centerfire rifle and you come across an opportunity to take a few squirrels or birds for the pot.

A word about inexpensive .22 and .25 pocket pistols. Most of them are near worthless—better than a knife (unless it comes to cutting), but otherwise not worth the money. While I did carry a horrible .25 Raven to the field as a private and lance corporal in the army (probably to the undiscovered horror of my NCOs and officers), I discovered it wasn't worth the weight each time I fired it on the range. I'd have been better off carrying another box of 5.56mm NATO in that extra first-aid pouch.

AMMUNITION

Ammunition is an important consideration when choosing a firearm. It's best to stick to the most common calibers because you're more likely to find ammo cheaply when there's not a crisis, and much more likely to find it during a crisis (though not as cheaply) if any is left. For rimfire, that means .22 Long Rifle; for pistols and some carbines, you're looking at .32, .38 Special, .357 Magnum, 9mm, .40 Smith & Wesson, and .45; and it's .223 Remington, .243 Winchester, .30-30 Winchester, 7.62mm NATO, .308 Winchester (interchangeable in most 7.62mm NATO rifles), and .30-06 Springfield for centerfire rifles. With shotguns, 12- and 20-gauge are your primary choices, followed by the smaller .410 (referring to the bore size, not the gauge).

Some individuals prefer calibers off the beaten path or that aren't military-equivalent calibers, and for potentially good reasons. Some like .222 over .223 Remington for some reason. A nice .270 is as good a deer gun as a .308 Winchester. However, if you're purchasing firearms for preparedness as opposed to hunting and varmint shooting, consider military calibers. The amount of serviceable ammunition one can purchase in .308's military counterpart, 7.62mm NATO, is considerable, and the same goes for 5.56mm NATO. You might consider it better to have an AK, Mini-14, and an AR in the same caliber to address compatibility issues, or it might go further with an AR-15, AR-180B, and a Robinson M96, all in 5.56mm NATO, all using M16 magazines.

Some people opt for pistols and rifles in the same caliber. An example of this might be a person with a .44 Magnum Smith & Wesson revolver on his belt loaded with .44 Special as a primary sidearm while carrying a lever action in .44 Magnum as a primary long arm. While not military calibers, .44 Special and .44 Magnum are effective and useful for both firearms. This can also be done with .30 Carbine (there are Ruger Blackhawks in that caliber along with M1 carbines), .357 Magnum revolvers and rifles, and 9mm subrifles and handguns, some of which use the same magazines!

Groups of like-minded people have been known to standardize calibers so they can take advantage of buying huge quantities of ammunition.

FIREARM ACCESSORIES

There's a difference between buying firearm accessories because you like them and buying what you need. I understand that accessories are made for those who want, like, and can afford them. I like to buy and use them, but that's distinct from what is needed for shoestring survivalism.

At a bare-bones minimum, you need a firearm, a cleaning kit, and ammunition as well as an understanding of how to use and

maintain the gun safely, usually available via the manual. Next on the list is a means of securing the weapon, especially if you have children in the home. Anything beyond that is extra.

One huge money saver is to avoid a habit of many enthusiastic new gun owners. Frequently, when someone buys a new handgun or rifle, there is an urge to buy every accessory known to man. You may or may not find that a holster or sling is essential, just as you might find that the standard grips, sights, stocks, and other features on the firearm are acceptable as is. Just be sure to think things through and learn whether you will actually use an accessory regularly before you buy it.

I know an individual who bought a SIG P228 pistol with a nickel stainless-steel slide when they were very expensive and hard to get. He put on radium night sights and cherry wood grips and bought extra magazines, bringing the total to over $900. Next came the expensive holsters and magazine pouches to match the different holsters. With all that money spent, he took it to the range and decided it didn't fit the web of his hand all that well (no firearm seems to in his case), so he sold it and I eventually got it, and it's a great shooter. But can you imagine all of the survival supplies and gear he could have bought with that money?

Good accessories for a pistol grab-and-go box—light, magazine loader, Gerber multitool with case, scissors for cutting cleaning patches, and cleaning kit.

Holsters can become the largest waste of money if you buy one you're not comfortable with or if it doesn't last. I used to prefer a certain model of holster by a major manufacturer. I bought several, but mostly for the same carry gun, as they wore out over time. I paid around $40, $50, and $60 dollars for each one as prices went up and the product didn't improve. That's obviously not cost effective.

If you're totally unfamiliar with holsters, the best way to proceed is to learn about the different types, such as shoulder rigs, small of the back, paddle, belt slide, etc., and decide what you need and what appears comfortable—but to be economic, consider an inexpensive Kydex holster as a starting point. They're not only cheap (therefore inexpensive enough to buy new ones as replacements), they retain the weapon well enough for regular wear, and they're easy to find. Properly tightened, they'll retain the gun well enough but allow for an incredibly quick draw. One aspect I like about Kydex holsters is that it's easy to get a gun back in and secured than with most other holsters. Usable, inexpensive models include the Matrix by Galco, which are durable, comfortable holsters, and the Uncle Mike's Belt Slide types, which are very inexpensive but lose hardware rapidly. (If you buy any synthetic holster that has screws and nuts, inspect them regularly and use adhesives that secure the hardware. I've broken the paddle on too many synthetic holsters to recommend the older paddle versions—might be me, might be them, but it happens, and distressingly it always happens when you have the firearm in the rig.)

Finding revolver holsters isn't as easy as it was years ago, unless one finds surplus police ones, normally in plain black leather or more commonly in black basket weave. Be cautious of old, used, shaped leather holsters, especially if they were formerly owned by cops. The ones with different retention types might be flawed, and you'll find that you've bought a holster that's more of a trigger lock (what some cops call a "suicide holster"). Others might have bent brass trigger-guard catches, and they might actually brush the trigger!

Avoid inside-the-pants suede holsters unless they're lined. While these holsters might be suitable for day-to-day use, in most survivalism scenarios there's more exposure to weather, whether wet or hot, and a higher level of physical activity nor-

mally occurs, which causes perspiration. If the climate is warm or if you live where the humidity is high, or even if you're a sweaty individual, the gun might develop rust within a few days in a suede holster. Few individuals check their carry firearm daily, especially if you've no need to unload it when at home, and even if you do check it, it's still spending a lot of time with trapped moisture.

You might consider buying certain inexpensive accessories to protect a more valued part. I once picked up a Mini-14 GB with a unique feature—it had one of the camouflage-laminated stocks in excellent condition. I knew that steady use might cause that interesting item to be scratched and marred, so I picked up a standard wooden stock for hardly anything. It might have even been given to me, as so many people change the stocks on those rifles. Retaining the camo stock in good condition maintained its value.

One popular improvement on rifle and submachine gun magazines that's in vogue are the Magpul attachments, either the synthetic rubber ones that fit over the bottom of the magazine or the hardened synthetic one that actually replaces the baseplate. Excellent idea, and great accessories for corporate warriors (the current term for mercenaries), soldiers, and Marines, but a bit expensive for budget survivalism. Long before Magpul produced their product, we soldiers and Marines used the standby of 100 mph tape wrapped around the bottom of the magazine and a loop of 550 cord. It worked excellently and cost us nothing but time.

How many magazines are too many magazines? If you're going to sell the firearm and you don't have any other weapon that uses those magazines, and you're not planning on buying another weapon that uses those magazines, you might have wasted money except as barter items. (This violates the rule of barter in that you don't trade something that can cause you harm, but we'll get into that in Chapter 12.) With survivalism, it's about being ready over the long term, so having a considerable number of magazines is not unreasonable. For a semiautomatic rifle that's a primary weapon, you might consider a minimum of seven. For a pistol that's a primary carry piece, perhaps three magazines as a bare minimum, five if it's a lower-capacity.45.

One item that I've found to be of limited use to shoestring survivalism is an expensive sling. If you are moving past the basics in gun accessories, a three-point tactical sling might be an option, and I do buy them. Companies like Uncle Mike's make a wide variety of decent, inexpensive slings, but for shoestring survivalism, one can make a sling less expensively than buying one.

Some tactical slings run up to $60 for what is basically a few dollars in Zytel clips and webbing and a little bit of sewing. The webbing doesn't cost much—you'll be able to get what you need for under three bucks—and if you shop around, such hardware as M buckles and cinch buckles cost around a quarter or less each! You can even scavenge padded shoulder straps and clips off old backpacks. While some major makers of tactical gear might not like me writing this, you can look at the detailed, clear photographs in company literature and on websites and figure out how to put it all together. You might even come up with much better designs, as we did in the Army and Marines before tactical slings were readily available.

Options for making your own sling are limited only by your creativity. Leather belts, guitar slings, and backpack straps all can be used to make decent slings. You can also go to a dollar store, find a long, wide pet leash made of webbing, and go from there if you want something quick that works. Some mail-order and surplus companies offer a simple web belt that is about an inch and a quarter wide that makes an excellent sling and also looks good. They cost about $3 and change, and I've found that I prefer to use them over most of my other slings. Another technique is to simply get some webbing and 550 cord and make an over-the-shoulder patrol rig. Why pay $49.95 for the Recon Urban Warrior Anti-Terrorist sling for your beater Enfield Rifle or new Mini-14 when all you need to do is sling the rifle when watching for looters?

Stock accessories can be an expensive distraction. I've got pistol grips for a Mossberg 500 and Winchester pump shotgun somewhere around the house. I found, as many have, that it's simply better to have a shorter length stock than a pistol or expensive folding stock, as it's not prohibitively long, handy to bring up, and more accurate. I might be a masochist regarding recoil, but I also want to shoot accurately and effectively, and

that takes priority over seeing what color the crescent-shape bruise at the base of my thumb can acquire with Magnum slugs.

Muzzle attachments for rifles aren't necessary. If it comes with the rifle, great, but for survivalism, who cares. It doesn't make sense to add a pin-on flash suppressor for $29.95 to an inexpensive firearm intended for survivalism, as they're mostly cosmetic and don't make that much difference. As a budget survivalist, you're better off spending that $29.95 on ammo.

The most useless things I've purchased are soft gun cases. Many of them are very expensive, and most aren't lockable. Even those that can be locked can't be very secure, as one needs only to cut the sides to get to the gun (even aggressive tugging can defeat the lock on most cloth cases). I don't like them for the range because they absorb and retain moisture, and you can't fly on the airliners with firearms in soft cases.

Hard cases are often cheaper, better protect the firearm (they don't absorb rain like a canvas-covered sponge), and can be transported by aircraft. They're just as easy to carry around, and they can be stacked and banded easily.

Here's a trick. I have a lockable hard case that's normally used for some sort of flat musical equipment—a keyboard or accessory; I don't know or care what it's for. What I like is that it's durable, it isn't bulky, it doesn't look like a gun case, and it locks. I've considered putting a radio station sticker on it to enhance its true low-key "camouflage."

WRIST ROCKETS AND SLINGSHOTS

Wrist rockets are slingshots that have a padded bar or strap that rests on the wrist to increase stability, range, and accuracy. On sale, wrist rockets, as well as other slingshots made with surgical tube or heavy wire, can be found for as low as $3. Given a summer, a lot of ammunition, and some adult supervision, a child can become a terror to pest animals, giving crows and rabbits no rest as they try to raid the garden. Such activities in a survivalism situation might make a significant difference in the amount of food you will have available. A wrist rocket also provides children with a means of being more helpful. Ammunition can include dollar-store marbles, but old nuts and bolts and small rocks will work. For older children who won't put things in their mouths that don't belong there and wash their hands before eating, buckshot makes cheap, effective ammo. You can buy buckshot in 5-pound bags for $20, but make sure that you're getting lead-free shot.

Airguns

The primary reasons for getting an airgun are pest control, very small game hunting, and target practice. Airguns can be used to ward off cats and dogs that aren't yours; killing rats, mice, crows, and other pest animals; and potentially for taking squirrels and rabbits for the pot if you're a decent shot. They aren't expensive, and the ammunition is cheap. They're also quieter than firearms.

Get a rifled airgun; without the rifling, it'll be too inaccurate. The best ones for shoestring survivalism are the Chinese-made rifled models. They're accurate, and some can be purchased for under $30!

Chapter 9
Shoestring Sustenance

Sustenance is simply the food and water necessary to survive. It can range from the energy already in one's body and not thought about in an immediate crisis, to just a few granola bars in a short-term situation, to full rations for a year plus a means of growing food for the future in the ultimate scenario. Included in sustenance are medications and other essential items necessary for individuals to survive.

There have been many books and articles written about gathering supplies for survival, and for good reason: stockpiling food and water and preparedness are inseparable.

RATION PLANS

First, get something straight. We're combating starvation, not worrying about food pyramids, earth-friendly containers, or low-carb or meat-free diets. Those options are all fine and dandy for those who

want them under normal circumstances, but they're expensive to lay in as contingency supplies on a shoestring survival budget.

Begin by asking yourself what kinds of foods you can afford to get in quantities that will keep you and yours alive through the ordeal. Think about foods you can stockpile easily and cheaply that can be supplemented by whatever you can beg, borrow, harvest, steal, or scrounge after the shortages occur.

Some survival practitioners suggest it's best to just get familiar foods so that it will ease people in your group through the crisis. The reasoning is that people can't transition to other chow easily even in the best of conditions (e.g., diet failures), so a critical incident isn't the time to make the change. Nonsense! Do not let that stop you from buying and storing foods you might not normally eat.

There's nothing wrong with having some Slim Jims and Cokes for you, Snickers and Lipton tea for your spouse, or corn nuts and Red Bull for your sons if that's what you all consume regularly, as those items keep well and will provide some comfort under the circumstances. But don't carry things too far. Again, we're talking survival situations here. McDonald's ain't open and Dominos don't deliver after a Category 5 storm. Albertson's won't have its nifty dinner salads and micro trays, and the sushi bar will be closed. Any fresh milk you get best not be wasted on lattes. If you expect that you can get the sort of food you regularly eat after the disaster strikes, well, it's not exactly a crisis so what are you preparing for?

The primary considerations for acquiring food for your cache include long-term storage and ease of preparation. The best items can be consumed right out of the package or can, requiring no heat while still having decent shelf life. Other products take boiled water or applied flame, and others, such as bulk wheat, require extensive preparation. For the budget survivalist, it's best to avoid the expense of bulk wheat, as it requires grinders and different sorts of end-of-the-world ovens to process into food, and such efforts require energy, yours or electric, that you might not have or that's become precious. That might be a direction to go once you've covered your shorter term planning, but for now it's overkill.

When planning for your sustenance needs, everything depends on the duration of the event. Adequate sustenance must be available for the duration or scope of the crisis, which I've broken down into four periods: immediate, three-day, 30-day, and long-term. Your greatest challenge will be meeting your sustenance needs for these periods in the face of limited resources and the limitations of shelf life for food, drinks, and medicine.

The Immediate Ration Plan

Your immediate ration plan (IRP) covers the here and now as a crisis develops. It's a short-term plan that covers the needs of an individual or small group, utilized at the onset of an emergency situation or for a short-duration episode. You'll need an IRP for circumstances that will normally be resolved shortly, such as when you're heading home, or for when you're not able to get home and don't have access to your cache. IRP supplies are often the most expensive individual items of your ration plans, but they have the tremendous advantage of being items you can eat immediately and store indefinitely.

The most immediate plan is to have some food in your car or at work in case you get trapped in either place during a crisis. It would cover getting stuck on a snow-covered freeway awaiting plows and rescue on a cold, miserable night; spending the night at your office because the power went out in the Big Apple; or even if you have to make a long drive and there's nowhere to stop for miles.

The items in your IRP might include energy bars, a can of chili, cans of Ensure, candy bars, Pop Tarts, Coast Guard-approved survival bars, dried fruit packs, MREs, or similar items—all things that can be kept safely within a vehicle or locker at work and can be easily consumed with little or no preparation. These items have decent shelf life, and those that don't are inexpensive enough to replace regularly. (Canned food should be rotated regularly if it's subjected to high temperatures in a vehicle.) Unless the name brands are on sale low enough to justify it, purchase generic store brands, and always check the expiration dates. For your vehicle cache, calculate enough that you believe you'd need for yourself and the likely number of passengers for an overnight situation, then double it. (Anyone carrying a diaper bag should consider the infant's immediate

needs, too.) Your work stash need not be so big unless you plan on sharing. (Don't overlook the food in the vending machines as part of your plan.)

Do not consume the items for your IRP until you need to! In the past, soldiers carried what were called "iron rations." These were durable, emergency rations that were used only when the regular rations weren't available. It took high-level orders for soldiers to lawfully dig into them. Consider your IRP like iron rations. You don't dig into them if you can get something else where you are, or have the time and energy to make something else.

Water is also a component of the IRP and perhaps the most important part, as you can go longer without food than you can without water. While a gallon per person per day is considered a minimum for drinking, cooking, and cleaning, the IRP is meant to see you through for a day or two. Perhaps a liter or two per person would suffice in the short term, but raise the amount of water if the food selected is especially dry or if you have young children or elderly in your care.

Don't discount soft drinks. Occasionally, otherwise helpful disaster preparedness literature will state that coffee, tea, and soft drinks don't fill water needs and are diuretic. However, millions of people drink soda and ice tea almost exclusively, and amazingly, they haven't died of thirst.

An IRP for children can be called their "Emergency Food Kit," which is bought at the beginning of each school year and contains juice, energy or granola bars, fruit cups, and other such items. Let them select some comfort foods to supplement the stuff you deem necessary to get them through a short-term situation.

The 3-Day Ration Plan

The three-day ration plan (3DRP) covers a short-duration crisis during which it's unsafe to go out, such as during a blackout or blizzard or if there is rioting in the streets, or simply when establishing a routine practice of emptying out the fridge. This stuff can also be consumed if you are starting to move to the next ration plan. The Red Cross and FEMA suggest having enough rations for three days, but this simply isn't sufficient for most natural disasters where resources are cut off. I think they should recommend a week as a minimum. For true preparedness, you

CALCULATING YOUR NEEDS WITH SHOESTRING SURVIVALISM

Take a moment and consider whom you want to save if a massive calamity struck your area. Now narrow it down to whom you must save, which normally includes immediate family and perhaps close friends. Now you know how many people you must feed, water, clothe, and protect during a crisis.

This is your group.

Figure that each person requires roughly a daily minimum of 1,500 to 2,000 calories and a gallon of water for drinking and washing per day in moderate weather. You also need roughly 20 square feet of covered space per person. Strenuous activity and inclement weather causes water and food consumption to rise.

Add provisions for one or two to compensate for waste, loss, and pilferage if you're dealing with more than two or three people. You might wish to expand further in case you find an additional person to help or just as a safety to stretch your supplies an extra day or two.

Now estimate a minimum number of days to be able to live self-sufficiently. Generally, FEMA, the Red Cross, and other organizations say to have 72 hours of food and water on hand. Well, the reality is that reestablishing infrastructure that's been wiped out takes more than 72 hours. Consider Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, or the aftermath of any huge disaster. Three days is not long enough to see basic relief reach all areas, let alone have infrastructure back in place.

Thirty days is easily workable with shoestring survivalism, so 30 days times the number of folks in your group, plus one or two others, ought to be your objective when acquiring resources. If you can't manage that, just acquire what you can and build from there. Don't plan on eating king crab and asparagus with hollandaise sauce every night, but you certainly don't want to eat oatmeal or beans and rice for every meal either.

Many of us live paycheck to paycheck, and we're talking a month's worth of food, water, and fuel for everyone. So for most of us, a budget-conscious approach to preparedness isn't just wise, it's required.

should look at your 3DRP as only a portion of a minimum 30-day plan, which we'll discuss next.

The 3DRP should consist of the food you put away specifically for it, supplemented by whatever you have on hand—bread, pastries, meat, opened packages of crackers, potatoes and onions from the bin, leftovers, bag salad, cheese, milk, apples, and so on. Before you get into your emergency three-day stuff, eat the items in the fridge combined with some of the frozen things in the freezer—meaning the top shelf of the big humming box in the kitchen rather than the massive chest or stand-up unit in the garage or basement. Eat your perishables first—unfrozen meat, dairy, and other fresh foods. After that, empty your fridge

and freezer of things that can rot if the power stays out and you don't have a generator. Consuming these items first is a no-brainer, or should be, but they can be overlooked by a survivalist who immediately begins digging into his stockpile of longer-term rations.

Conditions such as weather, the amount of food available, and the number of people to feed dictate what you do with what's in your freezer. You might find yourself better off cooking it up quick and feeding people rather than attempting to keep your freezer going, especially if you live in a warm climate. If you're attempting to leave your freezer foods cold through a

THE FREEZER OPTION

You might consider buying a reliable generator and an energy-efficient, stand-alone freezer. Oddly, you might save money with frozen foods because buying bulk is efficient in that form, and in a survival scenario, you'll have more options, some quite cost-effective when it comes to calories to dollars.

If power remains on during the crisis, your freezer is an important component of your 30DRP, as it'll preserve meat and frozen vegetables for most of the 30 days. However, you should not rely entirely upon frozen foods for your 30DRP unless you're absolutely certain that you will have reliable power or have an emergency generator, or you live in a region that stays cold for the target period.

To provide backup and help protect the items in your freezer, wash out some milk jugs or plastic soda bottles, fill with water and add a few drops of bleach, and store them in the freezer, converting it into a massive ice chest should power become intermittent or fail. This will extend the food safely for a while, depending on the room temperature, whether your freezer is insulated efficiently, how much food there is to keep frozen, and how often you keep opening the lid to the unit. Once these improvised coolers melt, the water inside becomes a resource, perhaps unpalatable, but safe for washing and cleaning.

For some people with secondary freezer space, it's cost-effective to buy a part of a pig or cow from a butcher. Scan the deals and learn the cuts. If you make a practice of doing this every year, then you will have items on hand that you need for your 30DRP. Overlap the purchase so you continually have at least a quarter of the previous purchase available before resupply so at no time do you have a shortage.

Another consideration is wild game. If you hunt or if you have friends who hunt and who wouldn't mind cutting you in on their kill for a nominal price, you might wind up with some elk and venison for the freezer. (If you don't hunt, it is a good practice to get into if you want to be fully prepared for longer-term scenarios.) You might not be able to survive solely on game, but it's not wise to ignore its potential as a supplemental protein source.

power outage, don't open it. It's even a good idea to wash and refill beverage containers with water and freeze them to convert your freezer into a large icebox. If it's winter, stuff it with bagged snow or ice.

The key to the 3DRP is to have food that is easy to prepare or take and eat. Normally, it will consist of the sorts of items you'd have in your immediate ration plan, like jerky, canned soup, fruit leather, nuts, and granola bars, as well as prepared meals you heat and eat. You also might include laying in some HeaterMeals, which are shelf-stable emergency rations that are cooked simply by adding water.

Why bother with having a 3DRP when we might have at least three days' worth of food in our cupboards anyway? Because the possibility of being hit when we *don't* have the food isn't something survivalists allow. But again, don't neglect what you have on hand. These items might be the last fresh fruits and vegetables you'll have for a long time, and you will regret having tossed rather than eaten the slightly flexible celery stalks and mildly wilted lettuce and browned bananas early on. Every day you're able to *comfortably* avoid digging into your long-term cache is an extra day of stockpile, so consume what you already have first, especially if refrigeration is a problem, and avoid opening items with good shelf storage life during this period.

The 30-Day Ration Plan

A 30-day ration plan (30DRP) is for precisely that—having 30 days of your food needs coming from your cache for however many individuals you must feed. A 30DRP will get most people through most scenarios, and it is the objective of shoestring survivalism. If food is disrupted for a month, a successful 30DRP will cause the crisis to have a negligible effect on diet other than not having as many fresh fruits and vegetables. You'll supplement your 30-day plan with vitamins.

The 30DRP is for a massive disruption affecting the entire region, such as after a hurricane, being snowed in by a major blizzard, times of civil unrest, or the beginning of crisis of an unknown duration, and it involves foods that are easily consumed with little preparation as well as frozen foods. The items in the 30DRP can include canned soups, stews, pastas, veggies, fruit, fish (tuna, salmon, etc.), and meats; shelf-stable microwave meals

FOR LARGE GROUPS, MORE OPTIONS

There are advantages to working with others and combining food supplies, such as with a large family group or church congregation. With more people and more incomes involved, there are more people available to pool resources, secure a few generators, have some major freezer capacity, and ensure adequate storage and fuel supplies.

The smaller the group, the less efficient the fuel use. Making rice for one person doesn't make as much sense as boiling more water and making rice for six or more people. Similarly, starting an oven to throw in one piece of fish and a few biscuits isn't fuel efficient. With a large enough group matched with appropriate equipment and planning, resources can be stretched and energy use streamlined for maximum efficiency. The savings really come in with starches like rice, oatmeal, breads, biscuits, corn pone, and flapjacks.

You can prepare many of the following meals for under a dollar each, and they're not hard to do. Not healthy, but you'll get by. Averaged, you could feed 10 people for a week on $200 using this system, as opposed to giving them two MREs each day for the same period at $840, or HeaterMeals for around $1,600!

BEVERAGES AND SUPPLEMENTS EXCLUDED FROM COST

Coffee
Tea
Powdered ade drinks
Iced tea
Sugar
Artificial sweetener
Artificial creamer

BREAKFAST (PICK ONE ITEM FROM COLUMN A AND ONE FROM B)

A.
Oatmeal
Powdered eggs
Pancakes from water-based mix
Cream of rice
Farina
Cold cereal w/ powdered or condensed milk
Biscuits or flat bread
Pop Tarts

B.
Hardboiled egg or scrambled
French toast
Spam slices
Canned fruit
Bacon strips

LUNCH AND DINNER

Ramen, supplemented with leftover veggies or pieces of meat
Corn dogs
Hot dog (hot dogs can be frozen, as can the buns)

Beef or chicken slices and stir-fry veggies
Canned chili
Chunky soup and rice
Canned stew and rice
Beans and franks w/ corn bread
Condensed chicken noodle soup w/ peanut butter and jelly biscuits
1/3 frozen pizza
Hamburger patty w/ gravy (frozen stack pack)

SUPPLEMENTS AND SIDES

Stir-fried veggies
Canned veggies
Canned fruit
Snack-pack type pastries
Snack-pack type cookies

There are many comfort foods within these lists, and with the group freezer option you can actually enjoy a wider range of frozen as opposed to freeze-dried and canned foods. If these menus are stretched with the longer-term food items such as beans and rice, pasta, crackers, pilot bread, and short bread, your savings and potential ration-covered period rises dramatically . . . and you have a backup if everything goes wrong.

(they can be heated in other ways); and other such items. Dry items include crackers of all kinds, oatmeal and other hot cereals, pancake and biscuit mix, ramen, pilot bread (also known as hardtack), cereal, dehydrated milk, and a portion of your beans, pasta, and rice. There are microwave bags of prepared rice and other foods available that are handy and can be heated on a skillet or in some cases by merely tossing them into boiling water or placing them in a box with a HeaterMeal.

The most efficient way to build and maintain the 30DRP for budget survivalism is to slowly acquire surplus by buying a few extra cans, packages, or boxes each time you go to the grocery store, and strive to continually replace what is consumed. By continually picking up a few extra items and rotating through the surplus, the 30DRP will develop into 60- and 90DRPs with hardly a noticeable effect on your budget.

After the IRP items, the food for your 30DRP will be the second most expensive food units you'll be purchasing. Ironically,

A wide variety of packaged food items are available and can be picked up every time you go to the grocery store, a few at a time.

Vacuum packing is inexpensive and, done right, extends your food's shelf life considerably.

the reality is you're more likely to consume the easily prepared or ready-to-eat items early on, when you have more fuel resources, and wind up with the ones that take more preparation, like unprocessed beans and rice, when you have fewer resources.

The Long-Term Ration Plan

The long-term ration plan (LTRP) is primarily for three scenarios. The first is a disruption of food lasting several weeks, followed by a period of shortages of different staples before a return to the new normal. The second is a period of shortages followed by famine, during which you'll use your LTRP to supplement what meager food you're able to obtain. The third is an unprecedented disruption, during which the infrastructure breaks down to the extent that any remnant central authority is in name and periodic display only, and chaos and suffering reigns. Eventually, unless you begin growing something, you're going to die.

The LTRP is for *anything beyond 30 days*, as it's difficult for a budget survivalist or anyone to truly know how long the need might exist. The best approach to having a LTRP for a shoestring survivalist is to initially buy bulk dry goods and hope to supplement those calories with other items and begin filling those needs, while keeping in mind that you need to eventually find a means of securing fresh food.

The food in your LTRP will consist of such things as rice, beans, peas, dried onions, oatmeal, pasta, ramen, farina, cornmeal, honey, and flour. Other options include dehydrated potatoes, textured vegetable protein, powdered eggs, freeze-dried beans, and powdered soups. Some are expensive if bought in quantities less than a case; others are reasonable. What a survivalist needs to consider is the cost of the portions and the ease of preparing the food. As important, or perhaps more so if you don't want to die of culinary boredom, are salt and pepper, curry powder, dried onions, garlic salt, lemon pepper, and other spices. Don't forget bouillon cubes and broth and maybe even a commercial-size bottle of Tabasco. If you see gravy mixes on sale, they're worth picking up—if you wind up just eating biscuits and gravy, you're not doing too bad. Given the suburban environment in which most of us live, meat might have to come

from snared squirrels and birds, or even cats and rats, but you need to have some stored tinned meat products such as Spam, deviled ham, sardines, and so forth. Freeze-dried meat is available from preparedness outfits like Nitro-Pak, but not often at shoestring survival prices. As additions and to provide variety, have some canned fruit and vegetables.

Definitely store vitamins as well. Many vitamins, especially "natural" ones, don't have long shelf lives, but having multivitamins to supplement your larder is essential for longer-term survivalism scenarios. Extra vitamin C is particularly important to avoid the ravages of scurvy if your diet becomes deficient of such natural sources of C as fruits and vegetables. You might have seen a survival show when the host brews some sort of pine needle or plant leaf to get vitamin C, but such extreme measures shouldn't be necessary. With even dollar stores selling vitamin C pills, there's no reason for anyone to suffer from scurvy. Stockpile them with your multivitamins, monitor the expiration dates, and rotate as needed. If you somehow get caught without vitamin C, it wouldn't hurt to know how to find such natural sources for it as rose hips and red clover.

FOOD AND DRINK

The poor in America—black, white, brown, red, and yellow—have been surviving on what we might consider to be basic contingency rations for hundreds of years. Staples include beans, rice, flour, pasta, cornmeal, potatoes, oatmeal, bacon, greens, onions, garlic, vinegar, cooking oil, hot sauce, and apples. Some also trapped small game and caught fish and scoured for shellfish.

While not healthy, the foods of the American poor sustain generation after generation, and except for bacon and apples, they remain inexpensive and are easy to store. This isn't about a healthy, balanced diet; this is about filling your belly, averting hunger pangs, and getting enough energy to keep going. It's also about supplementing these items with whatever meats and veggies you can find.

A nurse I once knew showed me how to budget for nutrition on a low income because she studied it for a dietician class. I became a willing subject of that experiment, and I learned about

different nutrition-related diseases and the importance of a balanced diet. Her project included developing a balanced diet for two people for one month on no more than $45 each, including the vitamins! This included scaling many of the items, including seasonings, rice, and other stuff not consumed within that month so that not a penny was spent beyond the budget.

From her I learned portion control. I learned that most of what we eat is actually bad for us, especially prepared foods. I stayed healthy during that period despite a hectic work schedule and insane Marine workouts. The diet included what I considered to be too little meat but lots of rice, beans, onions, potatoes, and some veggies. Vitamins came more from pills than food. Surviving on a limited budget and on limited types of food took planning . . . and lots of Tabasco.

With that in mind, let's explore categories of foodstuffs that will likely find their way into your survival cache. We'll start with the basic foods and move up from there.

Beans

Beans—pinto, navy, northern, lima, red, black, black-eyed peas—are a tremendous source of food for shoestring survivalism because they provide inexpensive, shelf-stable protein. They don't require much space for a lot of food, and when cooked right they're palatable. Like many, I ate beans on camping trips and as a side dish accompanying chicken, hot dogs, or burgers, in chili, and sometimes as soup, but beans for budget-minded survivalists should be considered the main course. I've spoken to people who've endured poverty in their lives—white, black, Mexican, Asian, and Indians—and learned that beans were a mainstay, and while they might cause culinary boredom, they fill hungry stomachs and gave kids energy to play and men and women to work. If purchased in bulk, beans can feed people for under a nickel a bowl.

A nickel a bowl!

The disadvantage of beans is the cooking time necessary to prepare them, which means a lot of fuel or electricity for a long time. They also might require overnight soaking. However, we're discussing survivalism, so beans can be cooked faster if you're willing to be flexible. It's simple: the more you break up beans, the shorter your cooking time. Yes, you might be eating

GARDENS

Ideally, a garden for a survivalist will provide enough vegetables, fruits, and herbs for sustenance, or at least enough to supplement stockpiled rations. Many shoestring survivalists live in urban and suburban places, so serious gardening isn't as obvious an option due to space, aesthetic, or zoning reasons, and for those who are mobile in their lifestyle, gardening might seem hopeless.

What is available to most shoestring survivalists are alternative techniques. "You have to know how to grow things in case the trucks can't run," a survivalist I'll call Albert the Croat informed me, as he revealed a portion of the bins of potatoes he managed to grow around the fringes of a backyard.

Urban gardening includes raising potatoes in stacked tires and barrels, as well as growing things in planters or window and rooftop boxes. There are websites and books devoted to this niche—look for terms like "urban agriculture" or "small-space gardening." For those in the suburbs, guerilla gardening might work well. You can plant crops in irregular ways, similar to how people grow pot—sometimes planting amid other plants to disguise the activity, other times placing the plants in a seemingly random fashion so the deliberate planting might be missed. For those facing covenants or wishing to avoid questions, plants like potatoes and onions aren't inordinately difficult to raise or hide among ornamentals. For others, simply going to the park and planting potatoes and other tubers in less-frequented areas might work.

a bean gruel or paste, but it's filling, and you're not burning all of your fuel for one pot of beans. Remember: food shortages often stem from fuel shortages.

Erbswurst was an iron ration for the German army. Factories made these semi-instant soups by rolling milled or ground peas in suet and wrapping it in wax paper, forming "sausages." The soldiers broke off pieces and mixed it into boiling water and had a quickly made form of soup. It became popular enough that it still is produced for civilians by Knorr. Think of something between pea soup and refried beans in texture, though it can be made thinner. Similar treatments of other beans will produce a mush or soup. It's rough fare, but you're not going to have to spend hours of time and energy preparing it. Consider using a grinder and coming up with your own version, mixing in some seasonings. Beans are inexpensive enough that you can experiment in advance or, as likely, experiment when you need it.

Bags of beans can be found in grocery stores (look low on the shelves), and for a survivalist picking up a few extra items, this

might be a good option, though not the most fiscally advantageous one for securing a stockpile. The larger bags run four pounds in most grocery stores. Buyer's clubs like Costco and Sam's are an excellent source of inexpensive bulk beans, and some ethnic Asian and Mexican stores carry bulk beans at low prices. Interestingly, one local store with an ethnic section sells pinto beans cheaper in the Mexican food area then in the regular bean section. Same beans, different company, different prices.

Consider this: for perhaps $7 you can pick up more beans than your family can eat in a month, and definitely more than they'd wish to eat, but you'd have it available for times when there is nothing else. If you're considering feeding a lot of people, beans are definitely on the menu.

Running a bit more in price but still inexpensive are the canned beans from Ranch Style, a firm that makes about the only canned beans I've eaten where I don't crave meat. A can of Ranch Style beans and some rolls or corn bread will make a meal for two people, and they appear to be a mainstay for some survivalists.

Rice

Rice feeds billions of people worldwide. A mundane item and subject, the stockpiling of rice for shoestring survivalism can't be emphasized enough to the extent of its value. Rice stores well and goes well with many things, such as soups, stews, spices, meats and veggies, or just with soy sauce. It is inexpensive in the United States compared to other countries, and preparation is 20 minutes of boiling and simmering for even vast amounts. You can learn to make sticky rice by adding more water, or grain rice by adding less. Rice serves as a ration for soldiers in many countries and as relief food for famine-stricken areas.

Forget wild rice. It takes too long to cook, and it's too expensive. It also doesn't last as long. Brown rice tastes as if it has more substance to it, which it does; however, it doesn't keep as long. White rice is easier to cook and more familiar to most. It's also easier to endure as a regular item and, combined with beans, it can form a stand-alone meal. A better meal is to mix in onions and diced meat. Rice also can be used to stretch soup or chili, ground up to make a flour in a pinch, and even eaten as a breakfast cereal.

Rice can be purchased parboiled (i.e., partially cooked by boiling) so that it takes very little heat to prepare. Microwave or

boil-in-the-bag pouches can be put in a pan with water. These are much more expensive options when going for bulk, but they're good options if cooking time and fuel is a consideration. There are also flavored rice packs from Lipton, or you can toss in canned corn and meat if you have it to give some variety to your emergency rations. In fact, with some diced meat tossed in, a can of corn, and perhaps a slice of cheese along with a Lipton Spanish or Mexican rice pack, it isn't a bad quick meal in regular times.

As with beans, a small bag of rice can be picked up as a stockpile item each time you go to the grocery store. Rice stores for an incredibly long time if kept free of moisture and bugs. With rice and other dried items, if you store them in clear, sealed containers you can gauge its condition without opening the lid. If you've had rice for a long time, you might see mites on the surface and their waste at the bottom of the container. If it comes down to eating the rice or starving, well, mites are protein . . .

Noodles

Ramen is an excellent food for filling stomachs, and millions in Asia have benefited from these wonderful packaged, dried noodles with a long shelf life. (Momofuku Ando, the Japanese businessman who invented instant noodles, passed away recently.) Ramen can be prepared in more ways than the package indicates, and the noodles can be used for stir-fry.

Somen noodles, normally eaten cold in Japan, are fantastic for stockpiling, and they have several advantages even over ramen. Somen cooks extremely fast and therefore requires little fuel.

$12 IN COMPARISON

For $12 you can buy two HeaterMeals or two MREs, which might be enough for one person for a day. For $12, you can buy one big pack and two small packs of freeze-dried food on sale, barely enough for one person for a day. For $12 you can buy six Dinty Moore or Hormel shelf-stable microwave meals and some MRE heaters, enough for one person for two days. For $12 you can buy a lot of canned food, including such things as chili, soup, meat, fruit, and veggies, oatmeal and ramen, possibly enough for one person for three days.

For $12 you can buy more ramen, beans, and rice than you can eat in a month. For $12 a *month*, you might buy everything you'll need for sustenance for your 30DRP.

Rather than eat them cold, they can be eaten warm by draining and adding somen sauce, broth, or ramen flavor packs. You can have a quicker-than-instant noodle meal that's filling. It's also as inexpensive: somen is often packed five bundles to a package, and a package can be found for as little as a dollar.

Pasta is wonderful food for filling bellies and stretching a topping like canned stew, chili, or soups, and it can be eaten alone. With a little olive oil or any cooking oil, garlic, basil, salt and pepper, or with just oil and garlic, you can make a decent dish out of leftover spaghetti, with or without meat, onions, or shredded vegetables. Pasta can also be picked up inexpensively and transferred to an airtight container; it lasts a long, long time if kept dry. This is bulk, energy-sustaining food, without any real vitamin contribution, but it'll fill your belly.

As with rice and ramen, you can prepare pasta quickly by pouring boiling water on it, sealing it in an insulated container, and leaving it for a while. It's not going to be as well cooked as if you did it on the stove for the full cooking time, but you'll be able to get it down. A commercial item called Pasta Express is available for this sort of in-pot cooking, and it has the advantage of clear sides and bottom for a visual check, but if you experiment and simply use any sort of lidded Tupperware-type containers, wrapped in towels, you'll do as fine. You don't need to have to expend fuel by keeping the water simmering continually. It's not going to taste as wonderful as Grandma Mary's pasta, but it'll do.

Crackers

Forms of crackers as an emergency ration for long-term storage go back hundreds of years with hardtack. Today, you have your choice of a wide variety of types, shapes, and flavors. However, the simpler types, such as soda and oyster crackers, store better than more flavorful ones and can be consumed even when stale. Other types of crackers and breadlike products should be considered to provide variety and preserve options.

Kanpan, or Japanese hardtack, is similar to animal crackers and served as an emergency ration for the Japanese army during World War II. It came in two sizes, and the smaller ones are still available and very inexpensive. You can buy more than you can eat for a few dollars. They're semisweet, very filling, and full of car-

Asian and ethnic grocery stores offer bargains on foods that are excellent for long-term storage. The somen noodle bundles (right front) cook in seconds. The barley crackers to the left of the noodles are Japanese hardtack, used during World War II and made as a snack today.

bohydrates. You can find them under such names as Barley Crackers or Korean Cookies, and they generally come in bags of about a pound or so. For a few dollars you can have a lot of these crackers. They're not bad to snack on, and they're great for hiking and giving to your kids, so rotation won't be a problem.

You can find so-called Filipino crackers and similar types in tins that are inexpensive and shelf stable. These containers have a lot of crackers for not much money. Keep in mind that anything designed to endure months in the tropics ought to do better even in a temperate region.

Pilot bread is a form of hardtack that's large, round, and available in most grocery stores in the cracker section, normally on the bottom shelf. While most of us have ready access to grocery stores, some areas still are isolated geographically, and I've been informed that at times, when the bread runs out and it's not time for the monthly supply ship to come in, folks fall back

Pilot bread is still used regularly in some remote parts and is available in many grocery stores.

on pilot bread. While you're looking for pilot bread on the low shelves, you might also notice the large wheels of rye crackers and other odd items that store well and can provide variety to your food cache.

Melba toast stores well and can be used to supplement your crackers and bread. It is expensive or inexpensive, depending mostly on the brand or where you buy it.

Breads, Biscuits, and Flat Breads

This book isn't a recipe book, or I'd have loved to include a slew of recipes for making breads of all sorts. Surf the Internet for terms like "fry bread," "corn pone," "ash cake," "hardtack," "dumpling," and "biscuit," and print out any recipes that look doable under difficult circumstances. (More cost effectively, cut and paste the recipes into one document, then print them out!)

Flour and cornmeal are inexpensive enough to experiment with, so if you have water and flour or cornmeal, plus heat, you can figure out how to make a form of bread. For all bread recipes, flour is more forgiving than cornmeal.

A bag of flour isn't expensive. Cornmeal is a bit more but still inexpensive. More useful are products like Bisquick and those small boxes of cake mix for a few bucks. Corn bread and biscuits are good items for including in your long-term contingency supplies. Some say you can substitute eggs with applesauce and some cooking oil for certain recipes. I prefer anything that indicates "just add water," figuring that I will have water. If I don't have water, I need to be finding water, not baking.

Hardtack is such a classic survival staple that I will include a basic recipe. Make a dough out of flour and water. Knead it thoroughly and roll it out on a floured pan until it's thicker than a finished soda cracker. Cut it into squares about 2 by 3 inches and pierce it through with a fork or knife repeatedly. Bake it at 300 degrees until it starts to brown and it's dried out (this will take a long time). Make sure it's dry and not chewy. It'll last forever if kept from moisture. Hardtack isn't practical to make once a crisis begins, but it's handy to have because it can last for years if kept right. Even if you do it wrong but don't burn it and get it hard, you have something to eat. Some suppliers for Civil War reenactors sell hardtack, but it's too expensive to buy and store from them.

Another survival staple, fry bread is quicker and easier to make than most other breads, and it doesn't require that much fuel. There are many versions, but simple is what we need to go with in emergencies. Make dough from water, flour, and baking powder, grease up a pan, and simply fry the dough in teaspoon-size lumps until brown. Bacon grease makes for better tasting fry bread, but you could use shortening. If you use less grease and keep it flat so it doesn't rise, you get a form of hardtack that's going to keep, and it's easy to make quickly. You can do the same with wheat flour or cornmeal—different tastes, but it works.

Another bread-like item is pancakes. Pancakes are easy to make, and the store-bought mixes are simple (normally just add water). Cold they're not bad as a bread substitute and can make for a good sandwich. Try a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with pancakes, or sausage or bacon and cheese.

A quick-and-dirty way to make dumplings is to make up dough (Bisquick is good) while you're cooking stew and simply drop the dough on top. The heat of the stew will cook the dough, and once you see a crust on top, you can mix it in or serve it straight up. Dumplings are a good way to stretch food and fill bellies.

DISPOSABLE FLATWARE AND CUPS

Don't forget to buy disposable paper, Styrofoam, or plastic cups, paper or foam plates, and plastic knife, fork, and spoon sets, especially following the holidays when the better made, holiday-oriented stuff is on sale, or regularly at Costco. You'll find that you'll get surprisingly good quality items for low prices simply because they're green and red when it's past Christmas, or pink and red after Valentine's Day. While you don't want a lot of food-soiled waste around that will attract insects, rats, and mice, think of it as potential fuel for the fire, and more importantly, you'll preserve your water by not having to wash utensils (although plastic forks, spoon, knives, and cups can be washed and reused). While you might not wish to use these items, having them on hand preserves an option.

While baked bread might be a labor-intensive item that requires a good amount of fuel to prepare, options include making it in or on a fireplace, in a frying pan, or in aluminum foil over a campfire. For the most basic of bread, you can simply take thick dough and cook it over a fire on a stick.

Honey

Don't forget one of the best long-term storage foods. Honey can keep nearly forever if it's kept clean and sealed. Even if it dries up, it can be reconstituted. Honey isn't good for infants and diabetics, but for the rest of us it's a good source of calories when eaten with our improvised breads. It's a potentially valuable trade commodity as well.

Canned Food

Canned food offers a variety of items that aren't as good choices as bulk dry items economically, but they do offer the tremendous convenience of heat and eat, or just open and eat. With canned food, you want more bang for your buck. In other words, you want as many calories as possible from each can, and by picking up items bit by bit when doing your regular shopping you can secure both variety and depth.

With meat, in addition to the normal stews, soups, and chili, you can also pick up straight tinned meat products. These are critical to your 30-day and long-term ration plans, and examples include corned beef (which provides approximately 720 high-fat calories in a small can), Spam, chunks of chicken (the kind used to make chicken salad), Vienna franks, tuna,

Canned food options available in any grocery store—you don't need expensive MREs. That's a utility handle in front, used to grasp hot pots or cans while cooking over an open flame. Found in any camping store.

mackerel (inexpensive), sardines, oysters, and clams. You can even find entire cooked chickens and bread in cans. Retort-meal (i.e., MRE-like) packs of fish, chicken, and even things like smoked oysters are becoming more common.

With vegetables, you'll get amazingly few calories from cans of some items like green beans, beats, and spinach, but that shouldn't stop you from buying them, as they're inexpensive and provide not only vitamins but variety to the diet. Culinary tedium is a problem with long-term ration plans, but purchasing provisions with variety always in mind will alleviate that.

Important: buy two or three new can openers and store them with your canned goods. Don't use them in the kitchen; don't use them for camping. These are for emergency use only.

MREs and HeaterMeals

MREs are generally expensive unless you're still in the military or have contacts in the military, so they may not be worth purchasing on a large scale. As I type this, I have a few bins

Freeze-dried camping food is expensive, but you can buy them a few at a time. The battery-powered camping lantern is a simple-to-use light source.

full of MREs that have been sitting around too long. MREs aren't something I rotate, as I don't eat them unless I have to. At best I'll strip out the crackers, the accessory packs, and the dried fruit and toss most of the rest without testing them. When someone buys cases and cases of MREs, they often wind up with the same problem, and those with less scruples pass these items on to others.

For budget survivalism, MREs are too expensive unless you rotate them. If you're facing regular natural disasters and will go through them regularly, if you can get them through contacts in the military, or if you can afford to keep them for a while and dump them, then by all means get MREs. But in general, they're not the best option for a budget survivalist.

With the HeaterMeals, it's amazing to me that someone will pay up to $10 for a meal containing mediocre spaghetti in a box when you can get mediocre spaghetti in a can for a dollar. These meals were shown repeatedly during the Katrina news coverage, as the feds gave them out like candy. Buy a couple and try them out. If they suit your tastes and budget, then that's great, but remember: for the price of those two boxes, you could buy more rice and beans and pasta than you could eat in a month. Better yet, use that money to buy several cans of canned pasta, some beans and franks, ramen, and rice instead.

Comfort Foods

Comfort foods are familiar, commercially available snack food products. Recommended comfort foods are those that you regularly eat, but in a survival situation they should be reserved for special occasions as treats. Some comfort foods might be totally empty calories or they might actually support the ration plans. Example of comfort foods are as follows:

- Cured meat jerky (e.g., Slim Jim)
- Jell-O and pudding packs
- Junk food cakes (HoHos, Ding Dongs, Twinkies, etc.—limited shelf life)
- Cookies (any type)
- Granola bars
- Peanuts

A UNIQUE SOURCE FOR DECENT SURVIVAL FOOD

Nutrisystem is a nationwide diet plan that involves the customers buying packaged, shelf-stable food by the case monthly. Most dieters fail, and when someone quits for whatever reason, they often do so long before they finish their purchased food. You can advertise in a free weekly or on Craigslist that you're willing to buy, at a reasonable price, the remnant items. The meals are shelf stable, similar to the Dinty Moore microwave trays or HeaterMeals; other items are dehydrated, like the eggs and some soups, or simply packaged foods, like the bars, chocolates, and cookies. While the failed dieter may have paid hundreds of dollars for this stuff, you might be able to pick it up at a greatly reduced rate. Yes, it's diet food, but you can use it to supplement your rations, and its diet value is based on portion control more than solely substitutions of fats and sugars.

Other people's failures in dieting can become your e-bargains.

- Corn nuts
- Tortilla chips (along with salsa, cheese dip, and bean dip)
- Trail mix
- Candy bars
- Hard candy

Water and Other Beverages

After any disaster strikes that potentially can pollute the water, assume that the water is bad, that sewage has gotten into the water lines, or that untreated water has gotten into the system.

To meet the "rule of threes" (i.e., survivalist author Ragnar Benson's suggestion of having three sources or means of doing anything necessary for survival), learn the best means for securing water locally. My options in the rainy Pacific Northwest are ample, but I've selected three as examples. I have stored water that I rotate, I have means for gathering rainwater, and I have plastic bags that I can simply put around branches and trap moisture and water from plants. If you must move to open water sources as one of your three sources, you will need three means of filtration or purification. You can use commercial filters, improvised charcoal filters, or boiling to distill.

Water storage is difficult. Many gallons are needed to meet the needs of even one person, and often the containers are expensive while the water itself is relatively inexpensive. According to the American Red Cross, a few drops of bleach are needed to keep stored water drinkable. Too much bleach and you're harming yourself; too little and the bleach breaks down and your water becomes stale, but you still have water that can be filtered and/or boiled that's free of gross contamination. You shouldn't discard water that has expired, as there are many uses for it. If it's still clear, it's as good as it was when it was bottled, but if you don't trust that, you can use it for washing clothes, bathing, or refilling the toilet tank so you can flush your toilet if municipal or well water is cut off for a short period.

Another prudent step to take in advance of a looming disaster is to use every clean container in the house not being used for something else to store water. One- and 2-gallon food-quality containers would serve excellently for short-term storage of

POTABLE WATER

This book is not intended to be a review of common preparedness techniques, but a brief word on acquiring safe water is in order.

In its preparedness section at www.redcross.org, the American Red Cross states, "There are many ways to treat water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods." They're experts in this area, so it's best to go with what they suggest. To sterilize water, boil it for 3 to 5 minutes, pour it between containers, and let it cool. For disinfection, the Red Cross says to "add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir, and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes." If you really want that water clean, filter it, add the bleach, wait, then boil it!

Distilling water is superior to the other techniques because you're getting water free from gunk and microbes. Distilling involves using heat to convert the water to vapor and collecting the vapor by letting it run down to a container. This produces potable water from river, lake, and even seawater. There are many ways to distill water, and you can set up a distilling contraption over a weekend and take care of a water concern if you have a decent source of open water handy.

water. You can also clean out empty plastic 1- and 2-liter soda bottles, fill three quarters full with water, add the few drops of bleach, and put them in the freezer. Fill others with water and the bleach and put them where it's cool and dark. It's very important to mark a date on them. Water your garden with the ones over six months old, or put them aside to flush your toilet or for cleaning or drinking in emergencies. This is an inexpensive means of stockpiling water that's not labor intensive.

Beyond stored water (likely lukewarm and possibly tinged with bleach), you're going to want something else to drink. Odds are you drink soda, fruit juice, milk, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, or powdered sports drinks right now.

Some survivalists say that soda pop, fruit juice, coffee, and tea are out the window for survivalism because they're crap for the body, have no nutrition to speak of, are too expensive to stockpile, and the money would be better spent on other things. That all might be true, but I've drunk warm, decontaminated water when thirsty and didn't find it all that pleasant, and the familiarity of my regular drinks is more than a morale booster, it's close to a necessity. If you regularly drink coffee or tea, there's reassurance and comfort when you still

get that hot caffeine fix. And some sodas are less expensive than some bottled water.

I stockpile soda, coffee, and tea, and I've never had a problem with rotation, so I'm not going to tell anyone not to stockpile what gets you up in the morning or through the day. Most of you will do it anyway.

Most soft drinks have expiration dates on them, and they don't taste as good after that, but that might be psychological. I once consumed soda from a local convenience store and discovered it expired after I finished the can *and then* decided it wasn't as good as normal.

With coffee, instant might be a good option due to its simplicity—just add hot water. With tea, individual bags make sense for portion control unless you're good at using your tea ball or whatever prissy method you have for doing that. The Lipton Cool Blend is good stuff because you can make tea out of lukewarm and even cold water easily, and it can be used to mask the taste of less-than-perfect water. Plain old sun tea is another option. To make sun tea, you simply place your tea bags in water and leave it out— it'll diffuse slowly even if it isn't in sunlight. Unlike instant tea mixes, the sun and cool blends don't mask the flavor with heavy lemon and sweetener, and you get a smoother, less tannic taste. When fuel sources are scarce or expensive, it makes sense to go with a cool blend or sun tea rather than heat a drink that you want to consume cold anyway!

The notion of warm Gatorade isn't all that appealing to me, but Gatorade, Tang, Kool-Aid, or any such thing stored outside in glass jars and jugs in the winter would work, so don't give up on cold drinks.

You might not regularly consume them, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to consider picking up other beverages just for the variety they provide. Dehydrated soups, hot cocoa, bouillon cubes, or packaged drinks such as Kool-Aid might not be part of your regular diet, but they'll be appreciated when you tire of drinking bleach-tinged, treated water, and you can get them inexpensively at Wal-Mart, dollar stores, and membership warehouse clubs.

Chapter 10
SHOESTRING SUPPLIES

Successful preparedness is about accumulating the right items in the right quantities *before* the event. Shopping efficiently for supplies is crucial to your success, as is keeping survivalism in the back of your mind for those times when you find opportunities during normal shopping trips.

While many shoppers fully understand efficient shopping techniques, others, especially us fellows, often decide we need something, know we don't want to make a huge project out of it, and buy it for what we feel is a reasonable price, normally based on such in-depth consideration as, "I saw it here first." Other times we grudgingly pay whatever the store charges, even though it might be too expensive, and shrug it off. That method works acceptably for many day-to-day items, but it's not the best way to shop for shoestring preparedness, where volume matters and every dollar counts. I learned the hard way that it pays well

to shop around for deals and bargains. Don't forget to either remember or jot down where you got the bargain!

There is a simple two-part step you can take that will save you money and effort right off the bat. First, determine what you believe you need; second, determine what you have that already meets that need.

Too many times I went out and bought something for an actual or perceived need, and it ended up being for the convenience of finding something on the tidy store shelf rather than amid the chaos of my garage. Just as often, I had forgotten what I had. It's more efficient and cost-effective to inventory what you already have, and then determine whether what you have meets your needs. This could save you hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Once you go through your items, you might find that you need a lot of stuff, or you might be in better shape than you believed. Either way, you'll need to go shopping.

If you shop at big box department stores, you probably have a general idea of the normal range of prices. If you don't, take an hour and walk around such stores as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, and Target, then do the same at places like Costco and outlets more geared toward businesses then individual consumers, like cash-and-carry wholesale warehouses. Compare the prices of items that aren't on sale. Bring a calculator and maybe even some paper if you're not good at keeping track. Now you know what things cost and, more importantly, *when you're being charged too much*—and now you can go shopping with a more informed perspective.

Keeping a survival mind-set at all times allows you to pick up items whenever you're out and come across unexpected deals. A trip to a drugstore chain to pick up a relative's prescription recently provided some eye-openers for me. I like polycarbonate water bottles—they're good for both wet and dry items—and buying knockoffs of the brand-name Nalgene bottles that work just as well at $3 for 10 is better than just having a few Nalgenes, so I filled a box with them. (If you're concerned about exposure to potentially hazardous chemicals in the polycarbonate plastic, you're in luck: you can now find these bottles made from alternative materials.) Not far from them rested a bin of fleece throws, three for 10 bucks, as well as $2 T-shirts and inexpensive sweats, all good barter items. At Target, you will find

water bottles, toothbrush packs, and all sorts of things in the dollar bins at the front of the store, or neat items like durable, hard eyeglass cases, which are good for pocket first-aid or other emergency kits. You don't have to physically be in a store to maintain this mind-set—when you're loafing at home on a Sunday, pay attention to flyers buried in the paper that advertise discounts and specials.

Hit the dollar stores with utility in mind. You might not perceive the need for a few extra buckets and washtubs, but then again, you're probably not washing clothing by hand at the moment. I picked up several 1-gallon food containers that can hold water in emergencies at one store and bags of tea candles along with a neat metal cup-and-wire frame that can heat a cup of water. Another dollar store provided tough little crowbars, so I picked up several and tossed them in the toolboxes and bags in each vehicle and in the house. I've found colored rolls of duct tape at these stores as well. One place has precisely the same items, same brand, that the Albertsons grocery store a few blocks down sells for two or three times the price.

Shopping after each season or major holiday also provides savings. Candles from Halloween, Christmas, and even Valentine's Day burn just as efficiently during a blackout in August or January as they do during their regular season. Safer than candles, glow sticks intended for trick-or-treaters that didn't sell in October work fine year-round. (You might consider buying a

10 SIMPLE STEPS TO BASIC CACHE BUILDING

1. Anticipate problems and shortages by knowing your area.
2. Learn the difference between needs and wants.
3. Determine what you will need or might need.
4. Determine what you already have that fills these needs.
5. Seek alternatives that you can afford.
6. Fill remaining needs.
7. Needs fulfilled? Upgrade and evaluate resources; now consider wants as well.
8. Follow news coverage of natural disasters and reassess needs and priorities.
9. Test planning periodically, and reassess all previous steps.
10. Remember that preparedness never stops.

few and testing them. I heard a complaint that chem lights from the dollar stores don't glow as long as those from the army surplus store. For a buck, I determined that the ones I bought at the cheaper outlet have a long, long glow period.)

Going back to the discount stores after the holidays provides great savings on more expensive items, too. Whether your clamshell (i.e., split-top opening) bins are black, orange, green, or red topped matters less than the fact that you saved money on each one of them, allowing you to put more in them!

So, an essential key to budget preparedness is simply to keep preparedness in the back of your mind continually. Then you'll see opportunities.

FUNDAMENTAL SUPPLIES

For most people who've thought about preparing for disasters, such things as food and water, first-aid kits, and radios will almost certainly come to mind, but your fundamental supplies include items beyond those obvious assets. Successful preparedness includes realizing what you already have but perhaps forget to notice as critical to your daily comfort and well-being.

Shelter Supplies

One of the basic essential needs, shelter includes domiciles, vehicles, or anything that protects us from the elements. Shelter might be the clothing one is wearing, or blue tarps tied to a tree and pole, a doorway during a hailstorm, a hilltop during a flood, or even a tree during a tsunami. For most survivalists, shelter is the house or apartment they live in or can arrange to live in when the SHTF.

In his book *The Modern Survival Retreat,* Ragnar Benson discusses the concept of having a separate location where one keeps stockpiled food, water, and ammo, and where one finds shelter during crisis. While the hardest of hard-core survivalists might go with a remote cabin or fully equipped underground bunker to serve this purpose, most shoestring survivalists must do the best with what we have available, which more often than not is our homes or, in the case of mass evacuations, the homes of friends, family members, or even understanding acquaintances.

It is essential to have items on hand to protect your home from weather damage and security breaches, make hasty repairs, and protect contents from damage. In this regard, one of the most important items that a survivalist can possess is tarps—those inexpensive, normally blue or gray, heavy plastic sheets. They can serve as ground cloths or be used to cover supplies, collect rainwater, waterproof the damaged parts of a house, or even provide shelter themselves when rigged with cords and poles. FEMA even used large tarps during Operation Blue Roof after the major hurricanes of 2004 and 2005 to make temporary repairs to damaged roofs to ensure that people could stay home.

You can find different qualities of tarps, ranging from the 5′ x 8′ jobs in many dollar stores (helpful for covering broken windows, as ground cloths for camping, and for making expedient shelters) to the huge, circus-tent-size ones with freight costs that would smoke a shoestring survivalist's budget. Shop for tarps carefully; it's better to see and feel the material at a local store rather than pull out the credit card and order one over the phone. You won't know its quality until it arrives, and you'll be paying shipping charges on top of the costs. Wal-Mart is normally a good standard for most things, as you seldom get overcharged and the quality will be good enough for most purposes. Costco often has large tarps of excellent quality, ideal for covering massive damage to your home or rigging big shelters. Outlets that specialize in imported tools have weekly fliers advertising good quality, relatively inexpensive tarps. No matter where you get your tarps, buy them in advance of trouble!

Sheets of plywood become incredibly valuable in hurricane country each season. One might wonder why people don't stockpile it, adding the sheets bit by bit rather than joining the rush to buy several sheets when the hurricane is bearing down and prices are already inflated due to the busy, coinciding home-building and roofing seasons. One also wonders what happened to all the sheets from the previous season. Following a big storm, many people simply discard the used plywood, perhaps believing they have no place to store it, but more likely to get the notion of hurricane behind them. When this occurs, you can get enough plywood to cover your windows for free by scouring through other people's discards.

I still don't understand why we saw news clips of people bemoaning the loss of photographs kept in albums and shoeboxes due to floodwater or tidal surge when they had five days' warning of immediate threat, and a lifetime of being aware of the threat, and didn't buy a $3 Rubbermaid container that seals shut, especially when secured with duct tape! Putting your spouse's wedding dress and formal gowns from special occasions in garbage bags, one over the other, might seem undignified, but it beats casting them out later with the mud and debris of your home. This is sheltering your possessions, and it, too, is an important component of your preparedness.

Clothing

Back in the 1970s, the conventional wisdom in survivalism was to buy secondhand clothing and have it available for emergencies. That's rather silly and wasteful if you think about it, because there is nothing wrong with the clothing we have on hand in most cases. While some people might have a predominantly business-oriented wardrobe, every normal person has casual and practical clothing as well.

You need to look at your wardrobe from the perspective of a survivalist and decide if what you already own will cut it under harsh conditions. Amazingly, as many of us live in well-heated homes and work in heated and air-conditioned offices, we're unprepared for severe weather changes, and we might not have recent experience spending extended periods out in the weather. Clothing can be considered a form of shelter, as it's often all we will have to protect us from the elements, so you must make sure you have enough of the right stuff on hand that will keep you warm and dry.

As an example, too many people attempt to drive over mountain passes and not think about what might happen if they get stuck after sliding off the road due to snow and ice. A friend of mine provides a typical perspective of not considering contingencies in just such a situation. She wound up stuck on a mountain pass during the winter, at night, having slipped off the road. She'd kicked off her shoes while driving, and in her dazed and injured state after the accident, she couldn't locate them in the dark and might have wandered off barefooted in jeans and a ripped shirt had a police officer not found her by

chance. Before that accident, she never heard or thought of preparing for a trip beyond having decent CDs, some Sobe energy drinks, cigarettes, and just enough gasoline in the tank. Now she keeps what she needs to survive in the car.

One inexpensive practice you can do to ensure a supply of dry clothing is to put clean items into garbage bags before the storm or flooding hits, perhaps even double- and triple-bagging them. But if you have time, you can do more. Why not put your old clothing in new waterproof bins or plastic trash cans with lids and duct tape them shut? Ever discard clothing because they're, well, a bit snug? Those might be the ones to put in the bottom of the bin, as natural disasters frequently cause people to lose weight because of higher levels of activity, exposure to the weather, stress, and a cutoff from the regular diet of Big Macs, potato chips, and 14 Cokes a day.

While many survivalists still stockpile clothing, perhaps it's better just to keep what you have clean. Clean clothing is not only a morale booster; having enough of it on hand will free you up to tend to dozens of other necessary chores during times when clothes washing will prove difficult anyway.

If you have the budget to accumulate clothing specifically for preparedness, shop around. At the Walgreens drugstore chain, I was surprised to find hoodies for $7, plus inexpensive T-shirts and fleece throws. Combining a $6 raincoat or $12 nylon jacket and a $7 hoodie with some thick work pants, boot socks, and dry foot gear, you'll find you can survive some rather cold weather. Some police supply catalogs sell durable vinyl raincoats for under $10 in either black or yellow. That's inexpensive enough to pick up one for each adult and put them away until needed. They can be repaired with duct tape if need be, and they're invaluable in bad weather.

At Fort Drum, New York, while serving in the 10th Mountain Division, I survived some harsh weather with some unauthorized clothing under my issue Gore-Tex parka and trousers. I wore olive drab sweats instead of the polypropylene underwear when the latter's funk got too bad. When the snow was very thick, I sometimes rotated from the excellent issue Mattahorn boots while they dried out to green rubber overboots with Nikes inside and endured terrible cold without problems.

One practical recommendation I'd make takes advantage of many men's day-to-day work clothing. Instead of wearing grubby jeans and dirty sweatshirts the entire time, consider offsetting the look by wearing polo shirts, twill jackets and vests, and chinos or imitation Dockers-type trousers in certain situations. This clothing is comfortable and conveys some authority without impersonating any official group directly. You might wish to supplement this with some professional-grade gear such as the stuff made by 5.11 Tactical, which is durable and well made (but expensive), and you can get some use out of it daily.

An inexplicable practice among some survivalists is to purchase and wear BDUs in woodland and desert patterns, especially the current camouflage uniform of our soldiers, airmen, and Marines, and wear them daily. This isn't low-key, and you're wearing them out needlessly.

If you have BDUs already, you might consider storing them for the emergency. Definitely don't toss them just because they're faded. Soldiers coming back from Korea often have incredibly faded BDUs due to the harsh washing done there. I knew one avid hunter who recycled his BDUs by dyeing them to appropriate shades to match wherever he hunted. Some of his recycles were green tinted, some dark brown, and some yellowish or light brown for grass and wetlands. Without buying anything, he was able to have clothing suitable for any hunting environment.

That being said, a budget survivalist might not need to buy camo clothing. If concealment is considered necessary, or you want to at least preserve the option, inexpensive camouflage hunting clothing, some of it long wearing, can be purchased on sale at Wal-Mart. I've recently seen shirts for $4.50 and caps for $2 there. One can also select clothing that offers good concealment yet allow you to remain low-key. That would be a wardrobe in muted tones with which you could go shopping, hit the library, go out to a decent restaurant, and work in, yet in seconds could be converted to tactically acceptable clothing that provides concealment in the woods. Oddly, outdoor gear is more commonly worn in the city than in suburbia, and in Seattle, one can still wear a tan vest and brown cargo pocket pants and not be noticed.

An opposite aspect of survivalist clothing is needing to know where everyone is, especially within a crowd. Inexpen-

sive hats in the same color might be a great way to identify your people quickly. You need only select a distinct color—say, a khaki or red. When in a crowded area such as a shelter, you can scan the crowd and see where your spouse and kids are. You might even find that others will direct anyone who strays from your group over to the other people with the same hats.

One thing I learned in the Marines and Army is that when you're wet and miserable, simply having a dry pair of socks and dry boots is a morale booster disproportionate to the physical effects. Buy sturdy socks that cost less than a buck a pair and store them in a Ziplock bag.

When it comes to footgear, you know what you need to have—sturdy work boots, hiking boots, or, if you live in northern climates, snow boots. Whether it's a matter of having the best or the cheapest you can get by with, it's not inordinately expensive to take one pair that's just worn enough to be broken in and put it aside rather than wear every pair until they're worn out. Clean them and bag them so you know you'll have something on hand in an emergency.

Another item to have on hand is flip-flops or slippers, which you can buy for a buck. If you must go to a shelter, or you have many people staying in one place, they are invaluable for when you use the shower or just need to pad to the bathroom without the hassle of lacing up your boots every time. They'll protect you from athlete's foot and cut down on noise, too.

Tools

The most important thing to remember about tools is to have them *on hand* before a disaster strikes. If you're starting from scratch and not doing major projects in remote areas, one practical method of acquiring tools is to buy cheap stuff and replace each item with a better quality one when it breaks. You just go to the hardware store and get something better. You wind up with a toolbox that includes such things as a well-worn but functional Chinese-import pipe wrench that's going to outlast you, a pair of Channellock long-nosed pliers, a variety of screwdrivers and wrenches, and an assortment of specialty items that you needed for odd jobs. This is actually a practical means of obtaining the quality of tool that matches your needs because

SOURCES FOR SUPPLIES

Throughout this book I've noted various stores and other outlets for inexpensive supplies. Here is a quick review of some of the primary places to explore:

- *Discount warehouse clubs.* Costco, Sam's Club, and BJ's Wholesale Club are ideal places to find bulk food items, but they offer plenty of other things, too—clothes, books, tools, medicines, housewares, hardware, pet supplies; you name it. If you have one in your area, you will almost certainly make up the $50 membership fee in savings in only a few well-planned shopping trips. But be careful—it's easy to get carried away in these places and buy things that aren't necessarily cheaper there, or things that might seem useful but actually would just waste space.
- *Discount department stores.* Wal-Mart and K-Mart are great for inexpensive clothes, kitchen supplies, toiletries, basic hardware and tools, and car accessories, among many other things. Discount drugstores like Walgreens and Rite Aid fall into this category.
- *Dollar stores.* Could there be any better outlet for shoestring survival items?
- *Charity outlets.* You might be surprised what you'll find in places like Goodwill and Salvation Army. Some are shabbier than others, but they are always worth investigating. Charity stores in northern states will have a better selection of cold-weather clothes; those in the Pacific Northwest might carry a lot of raingear.
- *Flea markets and garage sales.* Cheap clothes, tools, radios, containers, books, etc. Anything that requires electricity to operate needs to be tested for proper functioning before purchase.
- *Online.* This is huge! The Internet is not only essential for comparison price shopping, but you will find dedicated discount websites for virtually any category of product imaginable. For used items, unbelievable bargains can be found at the fantastic Internet classifieds section Craigslist and the renowned auction site eBay. If you are not already familiar with these two resources, get to know them now.

Toilet paper and paper towels can be purchased in bulk very inexpensively at warehouse membership clubs like Costco and Sam's.

the heavy-use items get upgraded sooner. However, in the midst of preparing for an oncoming natural disaster, in the process of surviving one, or in the aftermath, it is a terrible time to discover your cheap tool doesn't cut it, so I offer this advice guardedly.

Another option is to buy used tools of known good quality. Craftsman is a wise choice, as I've heard of Craftsman tools being replaced for free even though they're in horrendous condition from heavy use. I like the FatMax line of tools from Stanley, and I hit Internet bidding sites for those. When buying used stuff, try to determine why they are selling them before making the purchase. You can pick up tools inexpensively at garage sales, and, sadly, you can get tremendous bargains on good quality items with a lot of character at estate sales. Your coworkers and friends are another source. When one of them boasts that he bought a new, high-speed tool with all the bells and whistles, ask him what he did with the old one. He's often in the middle of talking smack and might offer to just give you the old one because he's so darn pleased with the new one!

If you're buying power tools, opt for cordless ones. Cordless tools with the newer batteries can be picked up and used days after the power is out. For depth, you should have a manual backup for each power tool you think you'll need—for example, hand drills and crosscut and back saws to back up your electric drill and circular and jig saws.

I live in earthquake country, so I keep a bag ready for improvised extractions. I know that in serious situations it's best to wait for professional help, but what if it's a scenario like Katrina or Rita, where the help's not coming? Or like during some recent California quakes where authorities prevented would-be rescuers from going into buildings for safety reasons while victims bled to death inside? That's safety? It's tragic that no organization I know of teaches private citizens how to best enter a damaged building because they don't want the liability, and they'd rather send a message that "it's better to wait until trained personnel arrive." If trained personnel never arrive, well, at least those agencies won't get sued . . . but people will die.

If it's my family member, I'm going in. I keep lights, jacks, pry bars, hacksaws, wood saws, gloves, rope, hard hats, and kneepads assembled in a bag. The hard hat cost me 75 cents and

it was new, surplus. The kneepads are someone's souvenir from Iraq. The other items I simply picked up new or used around town or over the Internet.

Besides the usual assortment of tools, you should also have staple and nail guns, duct tape, tarps, plastic sheeting, rope, more duct tape, and, of course, sheets of plywood to do hasty repairs and keep the weather out. Don't overlook small stuff: good tweezers, scissors, glue, wire, electrical tape, and so on.

Bladed Implements

My experience with bladed implements consists mainly of making and breaking things as well as gutting a lot of fish and critters and sometimes skinning them, so for me, they are tools rather than weapons. As with firearms, I drift from what I need to what I like and what I want, and I'll buy things I neither need nor use just because I like them.

As a minimum, I prefer to have a simple axe and machete (or a kukri to replace both), sheath knife, multitool, and pocketknives, both expensive and cheap ones.

One thing to remember about budget survivalism is that using the right tool for the job makes the most sense. Knives are for cutting and maybe self-defense, but not for the hundreds of other abuses people put them through (unless you have cheapie disposable ones). So don't use a knife as a pry bar, and dig a hole with a shovel or entrenching tool, not a knife. Keep that in mind and you'll need a less expensive knife, and you might be like me and find you'll never break a knife unless you deliberately try to do so to "test" one.

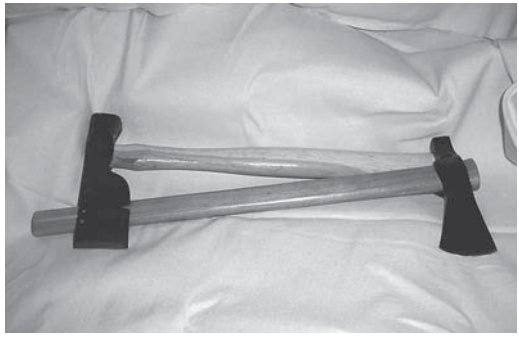
Heavier Blades

I like the utility of tomahawks, and I find them superior to hatchets for getting the same job done—scoring, splitting kindling, and cutting down light stuff, although not for day-to-day use. Obtaining a good, inexpensive tomahawk from Cold Steel will fulfill the needs of many, but you also can buy an old shingling hammer and fit it with the longest hammer handle you can find and you'll have a very workable tool . . . or weapon. While shingling hammers are often expensive new, you might find them as I found them—a dollar apiece at a garage sale, plus the price of a replacement handle.

Brazilian-made Tramontina machetes are a fantastic buy. They're very inexpensive, and they're rugged and perfect for cutting. Brazilians know machetes better than we do, as I found out in Panama. U.S. military machetes are wonderfully made—clean, stout, with expensive scabbards, and they're probably made to defined specs. They're fantastic . . . until you use them, especially after you've used a good Tramontina at a third to half the price. In this case, the much less expensive item is better. The Tramontinas come with black plastic or wooden handles, and normally you'll have to make a sheath for safety or carry. Yes, I know that in Panama and other places guys often just thrust them into their belts, but don't take that risk. You can cut tree limbs and roots with these things. You might as well get a few before Tramontina starts charging what they're worth instead of their current low prices.

All Cold Steel machetes are relatively inexpensive, well-made, decent products that hold up to use and abuse. The Cold Steel Kukri machete is inexpensive and compares well with even their expensive kukris. Both can be used as tools and as weapons. The company also has a line of machete-like weapons in traditional styles like the Kopis, Sax, and Bowie.

"Authentic" kukris with the crude wooden handles and funny, brass-tipped black scabbards are decent items, often available for as low as $12.95. The blades do rust, but it doesn't take much to take that off. They're not pretty, but they hold up well. I tried to break one and failed. If you buy one of those and have it professionally sharpened for a few bucks, you have a decent implement. I've seen some folks use 100 mph tape on the scabbards so they won't come apart in hard use or under bad



Improvised tomahawk (left) used by author and a Cold Steel hawk. Replace a split handle on a roofing/shingling hammer with a long hammer handle. Works well for most tasks—driving nails, splitting light wood, etc.

conditions, or because they're just plain ugly. Because the kukris have a lot of edge, you can sharpen a part for cutting and leave a working edge for impact surfaces. Theoretically, a kukri might be the only blade you need . . . but as a survivalist, it's not going to be the only one you have.

Sheath Knives

You might try to make do with a variety of sheath knives. I like knives from Cold Steel, Ka-Bar, and Ontario Cutlery, as you get excellent quality for your money. I'm also partial to SOG, being from Washington state, but they're so darn pretty I can't bring myself to use them. You can get a decent blade that sharpens well and holds an edge even among the inexpensive novelty knives, but you get what you pay for, so have a backup.

In a pinch, you can find good kitchen knives that can do double duty as field knives. Chicago Cutlery and other companies make full-tang wood-scale knives that can take a lot of abuse, such as in hunting, and they're better for skinning and cutting meat than sheath knives not designed for that purpose. You can find them for a dollar in thrift shops at times. They have a full tang and an edge—not something you'd be able to use in a survival situation where you need to hold up your full weight, pry open ammo crates, or cut through a fuselage, but it's an edge that can do some cutting.

Pocketknives

Useful pocketknives don't have to be superexpensive, and it's better to have several less expensive ones than one really good one, because if you lose it, you're without a blade. I've put

The cheapie kukri is a great bargain, but some require periodic maintenance (or acceptance of a bit of rust) if heavily used. The smaller knife came with the kukri.

money into pocketknives and I've used a wide variety, but oddly, I wound up with something that in my opinion is more practical and less expensive—the Sears Craftsman lock blade. The knife is well constructed and rugged. If damaged it'll be replaced for life, as are all Craftsman products. It's not inordinately expensive, and backed with a cheapie pocketknife it'll do the job. Unfortunately, they don't make the model I like anymore, so if you see one for sale, buy it.

You used to be able to get Blackie Collins assisted-opening blades at unbelievably low prices—between $7.99 and $13.99 from different mail-order companies. They're pushing 30 bucks these days, but that's still not a bad price for a good steel folding knife. Blackie's assisted-opening "letter openers" made of fiberglass-reinforced nylon are still available for a little over $10 from discountcutlery.net, and they could have some utility as working knives.

Another consideration is to buy a container of the cheapie folders, the ones with the plastic grips and thumb-opening plastic studs or blade cutouts that you often see on the counter of Korean mom-and-pop shops, running for $2.99 to $3.99. Those knives, bought in quantity, can be picked up for as little as 50 cents each, and they'll make potential barter material.

Multitools

With multitools you get what you pay for, and unfortunately, this is one area where scrimping is a bad idea. Most of the $10 cheapies won't last a few days' worth of real work. A Leatherman, SOG, Gerber, or Victorinox multitool is invaluable and makes for a handy set of tools when coupled with a decent pair of long-nosed or other small pliers. With something as valuable as a multitool, it's a good practice to attach a dummy cord (lanyard) to them to prevent loss. If you want to see the utility of a multitool, watch the reality television show *Survivorman*—Les can make a trap, hut, boat, or whatever he needs with his handy Leatherman Wave.

If you do find a source for inexpensive used multitools, focus on Leatherman and the other name brands, and before you buy, examine every blade and tool and check to see if the pliers jaws are loose.

You don't scrimp on multi-tools. Here are various models by three of the best names in the business: Leatherman, SOG, and Gerber.

Safety Items

Having fire extinguishers goes without saying. You might use wet towels or a wet wool blankets to smother some smaller fires, but nothing beats a fire extinguisher for getting it done safely. If you're unfamiliar with them, you might be surprised to learn that you need to use more than one even for a small fire. They're worth having and not scrimping on, and they need to be replaced anytime they are discharged, even if only partially.

If you can afford it, I recommend spending a little money on high-quality eye protection that has protection on the side. If they're too expensive for you, inexpensive safety glasses that wrap around the sides at least are necessary. Chemical, dust, biological, and direct puncture and scratch hazards are concerns at any time, and during a disaster the likelihood of injury increases and access to medical facilities decreases. The most important aspect of using eye protection is knowing when to put it on.

Work gloves are essential for all sorts of tasks and can be purchased at big box home-improvement stores or at quantity discount from industrial-supply outlets for around a buck a pair.

First Aid

Get a real first-aid kit, not just a band-aid one. (If you don't know what I'm talking about, you need to learn first aid.) My recommendation is the military vehicle kit that includes a wide range of items, including bandages, burn pads, tourniquets, and slings. They are often inexpensive and they're designed for serious injuries, not nicks that don't really need attention. Get one for each vehicle you use regularly, and keep one at home. Check your kits regularly, as children and other family members have a tendency to get into them and use or play with items and not replace them.

Imodium and other stomach-settling medication are imperative. You might be able to shrug off the trots during day-to-day activity, but dehydration through diarrhea is common in survival situations. Some argue that if your body wants to get rid of something, you should let it and keep hydrating rather than stop the flow, so this is about decision-making. But if your farts become lumpy, you're sick. If it's sick like you've never been before or you've had some serious stomach problems in the past, you'll need to check what you're doing, especially with your water (make sure you're boiling it well) and the hand sanitation of everyone (especially those cooking).

Even if you don't have children, you might consider picking up some infant and children's Tylenol. Although this is about budget preparedness, for a few dollars you can have a literal lifesaver against a fever, and when that life is a child's, that's an incredible bargain.

Same with sterile gloves: a box of 100 will run you five bucks over the Internet or can be found almost as cheaply at discount drugstorers like Walgreens or RiteAid. If anyone in your group is allergic to latex, nitrile rubber gloves are an option. They aren't as sensitive as latex gloves and they're more expensive, but they are stronger and more puncture resistant.

Not technically a first-aid item, but don't forget condoms—just in case. If not you, maybe someone else. It's hard to read by chem lights and candles, and there's no television, and it's sort of cold without forced-air heating, and we have a drive to procreate following the loss of many of our number, and who

Full-size first-aid kits take a lot of space, but they are essential for any cache. Here are two "regular" kits, plus burn and trauma items.

knows who you might meet in a crisis situation. Condoms can also be used for waterproofing items like cell phones and wallets, for storing and transporting water, and for who knows what else.

A relatively up-to-date first-aid manual is a must-have companion to your kit, and it costs little to obtain a decent one. The Red Cross gives out thousands of manuals every year during its civilian first aid courses, so it is easy to find a cheap used copy at garage sales, used bookstores, or online. If serious injuries are your focus (and they should be), military first-aid manuals are a good supplement, but some of the techniques call for medical supplies you might not have in your cache, such as compresses.

However, one serious problem with first-aid manuals is that they all instruct you to call 911 and wait for help to arrive as you render assistance to the victim. What if the phones aren't working, there are no dispatchers, or whatever paramedic crew that's still working is miles away and booked solid? That's when you need to have such books as *Where There Is No Doctor* in your reference library.

Illumination

Illumination is vital for safety and security. It provides the ability to function after dark or in enclosed areas, reassurance for children or others concerned about the dark, and a means for signaling. Many survivalists carry illumination day and night, as they know that a loss of power inside a large building can plunge them into darkness, and sometimes trips take longer than intended. Available options beyond regular electrical lighting include chem lights, LED (light-emitting diodes) lights, regular battery-operated lights, and flame illumination. Each has distinct advantages and disadvantages, and some are more suitable all around.

For shoestring survivalism, I'd strongly recommend picking up a bunch of chem lights (also known as glow sticks). They require no fuel and produce no heat or fumes. Water and most weather have no effect on them, and their shelf life is very long. Chem lights glow for several hours, with the exception of the very bright infrared types. They're inexpensive, available for a dollar each or less in bulk, and they are frequently on sale following Halloween. In fact, they are so inexpensive that you

could leave several in each room. The negative aspects of chem lights are that they don't project a lot of useful light, and they're not reusable.

There are a wide range of choices for inexpensive LEDs. LEDs come in different colors, but the most common are the white-light ones. They are small enough to carry on a key chain, just bright enough to navigate by, seemingly last forever, and don't require additional batteries. They're great for illuminating a dark area where you may have dropped something or need to do a quick visual check, allowing you to save juice in your bigger lights. One huge advantage of LEDs is that they require little battery power; the negative side is that most don't project usable light for long distances. (More expensive models are the exception—the $10 to $20 ASP Lights are tough and bright.) A good option includes hybrids that possess both conventional bulbs for longer distances and LEDs for saving power.

Conventional battery-powered illumination includes everything from cheapie flashlights to the more expensive lanterns that run on D-cell batteries up to "tactical" lights running several hundred dollars. Everyone is familiar with the problem of flashlights: they normally have dead batteries when needed the most because batteries die in long-term storage. An option for shoestring survivalism is to supplement your ordinary flashlights with one decent Maglight as your primary light. Maglights are expensive but durable, project light a good distance, and provide the additional advantage of doubling as a defensive weapon. Some people put a band of light-colored duct tape on their black Maglights to make them easier to find in the dark. The common Mini Maglight can be converted to an improvised lantern by standing one on end and removing the front.

Crank-powered lights are hit and miss but are getting better. Some will hold a charge for months after a few winds. They're generally light (if a bit bulky), but they're fantastic items because they don't need batteries, don't take much of your energy to power up, and they'll always be ready after a few seconds of winding.

Flame illumination devices, including everything from tea lights to Coleman and oil lanterns, are common in many households but create risk of fire, suffocation, and explosion if used carelessly. Know what you're doing before relying on flame

sources for light. (Following a natural disaster in an unfamiliar place, for example, the first response to the dust and darkness should be to pull out an LED rather than flick a Bic, as an open flame will ignite leaking gas or spilled flammables.) That said, picking up candles makes sense, as they have a variety of uses and are available for next to nothing.

Other items that fall into this category include matches and lighters, which can be safely stored indefinitely and make good trade items, and as many batteries as you can stockpile. For shoestring survivalism, standardizing batteries to AA and either C- or D-cell batteries makes economic and logistic sense. Dollar batteries AAA, AA, C, and D work!

Ammunition

For affordable firearm ammunition, I rely on regular booths with good prices at my local gun show. I don't have to pay shipping, but I have to pay sales tax and lug the stuff around, or at least compel my sons to carry the ammo to the car. Buying ammo at gun shows for cash is good, low-key shopping, and buying a few cases isn't going to raise too many eyebrows, at least not compared to walking around the show with a folding-stock AK or tricked-out M4 (and then those raised eyebrows are in envy, not concern). At times, online sources like Natchez Shooters Supply (www.natchezss.com) and Cheaper than Dirt (www.cheaperthandirt.com) are more efficient, especially when the latter waives or reduces shipping costs, but you're sacrificing a bit of your low-key status, at least with the government and UPS. I've been fortunate with other online sellers, but it's best to go by word of mouth. If someone you know got a good deal and they're satisfied, you probably will be, too.

Reference Books

The classic science-fiction novel *Lucifer's Hammer* describes one of the most critical assets for a post-catastrophe situation: a collection of books and documents with how-to information. Electronically stored documents do you no good when the power's out, so you need to have this stuff on old-fashioned pulp and ink. Fortunately, it's easy to amass a complete library of useful titles at low cost or for free!

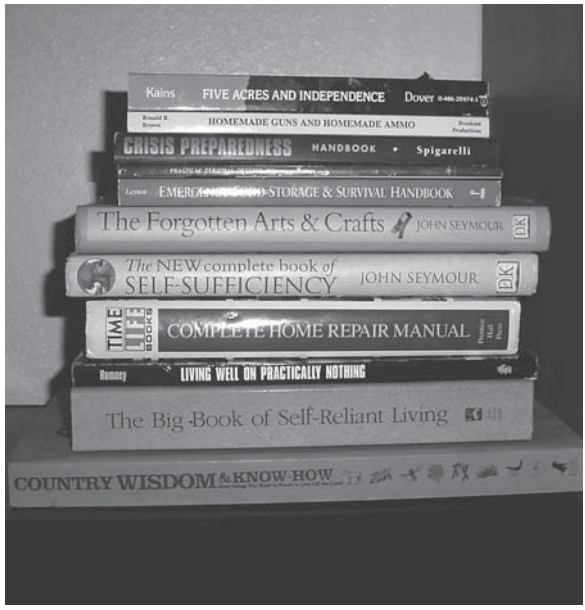
One step is to use the Internet to locate the information. More and more people are posting copies of old books in the public domain on the Internet, so that could be your start for collecting the old-time skills we discussed in Chapter 4. Keywords such as "forgotten skills," "old skills," combined with "public domain" on some search engines will produce results. Once you find a good site with links, it gets easier to find what you need. Simply download files and selectively print the useful sections. This could get expensive if you require entire books, but with your own printer and bargain ink cartridges, combined with resizing documents, you can print some public domain books inexpensively.

Much good information can be picked up from current books on do-it-yourself farming or living off the grid. Examples include *Handy Farm Devices and How to Make Them* and *Five Acres and Independence*. Compendiums such as *The Big Book of Self-Reliant Living* (600-plus pages; Lyons Press) and *When Technology Fails* (Chelsea Green Publishing) are other examples of superb resources to have on the shelf.

Websites like AbeBooks.com and BookFinder.com are fantastic online sources for used and out-of-print titles. Even Amazon offers used books at reduced prices. For example, the Reader's Digest New *Fix-It-Yourself Manual* goes for $35 new, but you can find it for as little as $4.25 through Abe or Amazon. The out-of-print *Foxfire* books on old-time skills can be found for $5 each.

Another trick is to call libraries and find out how they dispose of old books. Unfortunately, books on such useful trades

Expensive ammo can be purchased box by box as the budget allows.



Many helpful books can be picked up inexpensively. Note the titles on these.

as gardening, small-scale farming, old-time crafts, automobile repair, and shed construction are often discarded, so you're doing everyone a favor by carting them off. They may even sponsor an annual sale, where great old books can be snatched up at bargain prices.

STORAGE

Where to store all this stuff will depend on your living situation. If you're lucky enough to have a barn or outbuildings on your property, the bulk of the emergency supplies can be stacked out there, preferably on wooden pallets and covered with a tarp. (If you're storing food in these locations, mind temperature extremes and check regularly for spoilage.) A portion of floor space in the basement or garage of a typical suburban home or a secured Tuff Shed in the backyard can be dedicated to your cache, again up on pallets to protect it from moisture. (Where to find pallets? Grocery stores, shipping companies, or virtually any warehouse big enough to have a forklift will have stacks of slightly damaged pallets out back that are perfect for your purposes. They're generally happy to get rid of them.) High-value

items like ammo and extra currency should be kept in the primary residence for safekeeping. The neighborhood delinquents likely won't be interested in your crate of canned vegetables, but they'll happily run off with all your .22 LR rounds.

Condo and apartment dwellers have more limited options. Some units come with garages or small storage spaces, e.g., chicken-wire enclosures for each unit somewhere in the building where people keep bikes, skis, and other space hogs. But many of you are going to have to make do with piling it in whatever closet or cupboard space you can spare, storing it under the bed or covered up in a corner, or coming up with some creative way to keep it all available but out of the way of your day-to-day living.

As your contingency supplies begin to pile up and you move them to containers, you will want to have a way to rapidly identify what is in what bin, as much for yourself as when telling someone else to locate something. Here is my duct tape code for

This is one of several places where I store food. I don't put all my eggs in one basket.

this purpose. Thank goodness for Wal-Mart with its abundant variety of inexpensive rolls of colored duct tape! I've used colored electrical tape in the past, but it doesn't adhere as well.

- Red—flares, smoke bombs, etc.
- Orange—matches, candles, etc.
- Olive drab—ammunition (most ammo cans are already olive drab or green)
- Camouflage—tactical gear
- Black—communications gear and batteries
- Blue—potable water
- Purple—nonpotable water (for washing, etc.)
- White—first aid (I originally used medical tape, but it gets dirty)
- Yellow—illumination gear, radiation kits

If you're storing supplies in a barn, outbuilding, basement, or storage locker, rodent-resistant plastic tubs or the like are a must from the get-go. Same if you live anywhere where rats, mice, or other critters are an issue.

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As you develop your preparedness techniques and supplies, you might find that you cast off solid gear as you move to more expensive items. I'll again use a military example. When I was a young private, my options for survival and comfort items included only what I could carry on myself in the field in addition to the heavy equipment and weapons issued to me. That meant severe limitations, so I obtained an old, olive drab canvass butt pack and began filling it. I put in a sleep shirt, which was fantastic for keeping warm at night, 550 cord, some granola bars, Vienna franks, extra socks, a spare lighter, compass, tommy stove and heat tabs, and other items to suit the climate. I strapped an extra poncho and poncho liner to the outside; other spare items were stuffed in pockets. In this way, I always kept my options open by carrying additional gear on me for when we ditched our packs. It gave me a better chance in a survival situation, or at least a slightly less miserable chance. And more than once, I dipped into the items.

But I moved up in rank. I got a vehicle and driver. Because we monitored the radio continually, we ate, slept, and moved in the vehicle or in a tactical operations center or command post. Manuals, radios, binoculars, and such became more important than what I carried on my person as a private, and I modified my Humvee to suit my tastes. Extra stuff I needed now was stored in 20mm ammo cans, even a few milk crates and duffle bags, rather than pockets and the butt pack.

I forgot about the butt pack. Even the issue canteen got in the way when sitting in the Humvee, so why bother filling that when I'd converted the compartment under the rear seat on the driver's side to a cooler? But if I ever needed to ditch my vehicle or was away from it when things got bad, I'd have been in a cold, wet, hostile world of hurt, with too little gear.

The point is, as you develop your gear and acquire more items, don't forget the basics. When you start filling cabinets and bins with food and gear, you might forget to maintain a bug-out bag. If you purchase more sophisticated tools, you might misplace your eggbeater hand drill and crosscut saw. Once you get a generator, you might let the kids play with all the chem lights one summer night and not replace them. Candles are for romantic evenings, and they don't get replaced. Who needs freeze-dried food when you have a freezer and generator?

We engage in preparedness because we are aware that things go wrong. Well, things might go wrong with our survivalist options, too. Maintain those options by never neglecting the basics.

Chapter 11

Shoestring Sanitation

Sanitation is essential in post-disaster scenarios, so you need to prepare for it. Before the waves receded after the horrific tsunamis in the Indian Ocean, the mention of disease came up repeatedly and the attention and priority became stopping the anticipated epidemic, in many cases by managing the removal, burning, and burial of the dead. Maintaining a clean living space, having plans for collecting and disposing of bodily waste, knowing untainted sources for food and water, and avoiding individuals who are sick and outside your concern group all must be considered.

Ordinary waste disposal will probably be your number-one sanitation issue. If you have a septic tank, you have an advantage in that you can continue using your toilets by refilling the tanks with a bucket if you have enough water available for this use. (The classic water-conservation mantra is appropriate here: "if it's yellow, let it mellow; if it's brown, flush it down.") It doesn't matter whether

your toilet tank is filled with a bucket or through the city pipes; if you have a septic tank, your toilet will keep working to eliminate waste unless the system has been overwhelmed by flooding.

If not, you can improvise a field toilet using a 5-gallon bucket, trash can liners, and a toilet seat taken from your home. The bags of waste can be taken out to a metal can or oil drum and burned, or, given enough space, buried away from your home for the short term. Never just dump your bodily wastes into water, whether flowing or not. You could also dig a latrine outside; just make sure it's downhill of any water sources. Having a bag of lime on hand to sprinkle over the crap after each session will help eliminate odor.

Fortunately, the rest of the items you'll need for daily sanitation needs are quite common and inexpensive.

ITEMS YOU SHOULD HAVE TO MEET SANITATION NEEDS

An inexpensive priority item, bleach is essential for purifying water and disinfecting surfaces, sheets, towels, and clothing. Bleach isn't a difficult item to stockpile, as it's inexpensive, but it should be rotated. Simply open the extra jug after the one you keep for daily use runs out, then restock the cache, and you'll always have plenty. Chlorine used in swimming pools also might be a good resource for purifying water and sanitation, and it comes in a shelf-stable, long-storage, powdered form, but it's dangerous stuff to use unless you know what you're doing.

Hand sanitizer has obvious uses. A variety of commercial products are available, but one expedient is to save clean spray bottles that formerly held mild cleaning fluids, rinse them out thoroughly, fill them with a diluted solution of isopropyl alcohol, and use it for quick cleanups of your hands. This is less expensive than the gels and works effectively on both your hands and surfaces.

Latex gloves are a precaution when handling ill, injured, and dead people as well as people you don't know and for doing any distasteful task that requires you to touch something you'd prefer not to touch. Think pragmatic: you might be sick with the runs, uncertain about your ability to wash your hands thoroughly, and tending others you don't want to infect. You might

even don latex gloves when wiping your bum! Buy a bunch of boxes, as they're not at all expensive. If you're allergic to latex, there are non-latex varieties such as nitrile. Sterile gloves used by medical personnel are your primary choice, but less sensitive tasks can be handled with cheaper, clear, food-service types.

Work gloves are for the times you will need to pick up things you'd rather not. With latex gloves you avoid the skin-to-whatever contact, but you still feel the item and they provide no protection against penetration. Other things can cause nasty, easily infected nicks and cuts at a time when you can least afford to deal with an infection. Work gloves must be made of sturdy leather rather than the cloth ones commonly used for gardening. You can wear work gloves over latex gloves for some tasks, which not only will protect the latex barrier but will also provide at least some psychological distance from what you might need to handle, such as dead people or animals, or soiled linen. They also provide the additional sanitation advantage of reducing your hesitation to do such distasteful things.

Hats can be a sanitation item, as they protect hair from sun, dust, debris, goo, and grit. Hats and hairnets are good for large-scale food production as well and should be required in group settings. You might not normally wear hats in bad weather to keep in body warmth because you don't feel the need, but you're also not enduring life-threatening long-term exposure on a regular basis. Hats can be very inexpensive, so there's no reason that a budget survivalist can't have a few stashed somewhere . . . and with ski caps, who cares if you're having a bad hair day!

Masks are an often overlooked item, but they shouldn't be. Particulate asphyxiation is a miserable and hopefully avoidable fate. If you can see the air you're breathing, you have problems. Don't mistake ordinary dust masks for HEPA-filtered masks that protect against airborne disease, and don't overestimate the value of your mask when it comes to ash fall or managing the dead, where it merely serves as a morale booster. Most dust masks are better than no protection but often not much better than a bandana.

HEPA and chemical protective masks are normally beyond the means of most shoestring survivalists, but emergency evacuation charcoal-filtered masks for $2.95 each are an affordable alternative. They look similar to regular, over-the-ear surgical

masks, but they have an additional filter. Search police and EMS supply sites and move toward preparedness companies for them. Masks for spraying and chemical work might provide some protection, and they fall under "better than nothing." They are for getting out of a contaminated area, not working and living in a hazardous environment. The inexpensive Israeli gas masks dried up years ago, and many on the market aren't reliable.

Inexplicably, some people don't keep tampons and female sanitation items on hand, being used to getting them as needed. This is piss-poor planning. Have tampons or sanitary napkins on hand, in quantity. They also make great barter items if you find you don't need them for emergency bandages.

Diapers—get more than you'll need, and it doesn't hurt to pick up a larger size as well, as eventually they'll be needed anyway. Don't forget tubes of diaper cream if your child is prone to rashes.

Wipes are good for quick cleaning as well as for their intended purpose. Buy the ones that store the best, i.e., those with Mylar covers to the plastic or, better yet, the type that are bagged within a plastic tub. They store well. Avoid packages that come open easily, as the wipes inside can dry out. Get a variety—some might be absolutely no good beyond light use, and someone might have a reaction to certain types.

Trash bags and trash can liners are useful for garbage, improvised toilets, protecting things from the weather, and dozens of other tasks. Shop around to get the best deals. In New Orleans, some people simply double- and triple-bagged clothing in garbage bags to keep it clean and dry. Don't store food in trash or garbage bags, as they might contain chemicals to reduce odors and discourage vermin.

Brooms, dustpans, and mops are essential to maintaining a sanitary environment. Interestingly, with dustpans and brooms getting such heavy workout and moving much heavier items following a disaster, they are often in short supply. Having a few extra dustpans, brooms, and mops wouldn't be inordinately expensive. Don't forget to wear masks when stirring up a lot of dust, especially if you're working in an area seldom used, as a variety of diseases and mold spores might be in the air.

You may not have a problem with insects now, but you might during a disaster, especially one involving water or re-

sulting in dead animals and people, so don't forget the bug spray. It's not the time to shop around after the disaster, so having a few bug bombs, mosquito repellant, and flypaper in your stash is good practice. Embarrassed about buying roach killer now? You're a survivalist—don't sweat the small stuff!

How about flea collars? You don't need to be a dog or cat to become inviting to fleas. You also don't need to wear the collar around your neck, wrist, ankle, or even have it touch your skin. It works just fine attached to your belt. These collars not only repel fleas, they also kill them, and they can be placed in areas where fleas concentrate, such as where you sleep.

Mouse and rattraps are inexpensive and worthwhile. Frequently, they are items that people buy only when they need them, but in a disaster aftermath that's too late. Rats and mice often become a problem in a major disaster as the vermin are displaced and they become more evident. Always a disease problem, rats might explode in numbers as they feast on garbage. Glue traps are effective for individual rodents but aren't good for more than a few each, so consider buying rat and mouse poison and setting it aside. You might be astonished to learn that several houses down there's a rat problem, and once the available food there is gone, rat scouts could end up on your property!

Chapter 12
Currency and Barter

During survival situations, despite your best estimates, preparedness shortfalls, consumption rates, and newly developed or unrealized needs may leave holes in your survival supplies that need to be filled. This is where currency and barter items come into play. Preparedness is about preserving options, and having currency and barter items provides opportunities for filling deficiencies in your plan as emergency scenarios develop, during the scenarios, and most importantly, post-disaster during the recovery.

CASH

Having cash on hand is essential. ATMs, credit cards, and other forms of electronic currency frequently will not be an option following a crisis. Shoestring survivalism focuses upon the shorter term rather than the end of the world as we know it (TEOTWAWKI in preparedness circles), so cash

will definitely maintain value in most scenarios. Virtually everyone will accept cash when resources are short and it's impossible to verify that your plastic is good. This isn't theoretical, it's fact. When the power is out and services are down, many businesses operate on a cash-only basis.

When putting aside money, consider that making change might not be possible. Hundred-dollar bills might not be a good currency to put away, but twenties, fives, and ones are, and it's easier for most to squirrel away the lower denominations anyway. Don't forget your coins. Pennies might not be accepted even now (an exception below), and nickels are petty, but dollars, half dollars, quarters, and dimes are still money, and if that's a way you can stash money, do so. Perhaps it would be better to have each hundred dollars in a mix of $20s, $5s, $1s, quarters, and dimes, like a garage sale change fund, rather than a stack of twenties like the proceeds from a successful kidnapping. While most people will want the folding stuff, not everything is going to run several dollars in price, so having exact change handy might ensure that the "no change shrug" doesn't end with you paying more.

One simple technique for putting away money is saving $10s. Ten-dollar bills come less frequently than twenties and fives, and some businesses don't carry them in their change drawer, preferring to give you two fives instead. Squirreling away a few $10 bills a week or a month is possible even for those on tight budgets.

This is one area where shoestring survivalism can't save you money. You have to put away money and resist the urge to dip into the fund so you'll have it on hand when you need it.

At the very least, if you know a storm is coming, pull out whatever you can afford from the ATM and convert it to as many smaller bills as is practicable while you're right there at the bank. This should serve you well for buying groceries and gas if stores open on a cash-only basis.

PRECIOUS METALS

The record of precious metals as currency in regular times and during emergencies goes back as far as recorded history, and gold and silver holds universal value. For a shoestring sur-

vivalist, precious metals aren't necessarily out of reach. Although often seen as a consideration for TEOTWAWKI scenarios that involve a collapse of currency, precious metal acquisition can be justified as the cliché "hedge against inflation" and, with the rise in their value, as a long-term investment.

The primary currency of many survivalists is gold and silver, as it always has been; however, with its rise in value, copper must be added to the list. The most common gold currency for survivalism comes in the form of coins issued by the United States, Canada, China, England, and South Africa, in 1 ounce, half ounce, quarter ounce, and even one-tenth ounce units. Unfortunately, gold is beyond the reach of most budget survivalists as a stockpiled commodity, and it's hard to make change for even a quarter ounce of gold, so silver is a better option for regular exchanges.

Once regarded as the standard currency of survivalism, silver dollars, half dollars, quarters, and dimes from 1964 or earlier have a silver content of about 90 percent and therefore have value exceeding their denomination, but not in the numismatic value category. They can be purchased in small amounts from coin shops, and gradually a stockpile of a recognized precious metal currency can be built up to substantial levels. The advantages of having a form of money that has its own value and in different denominations makes it a good medium of exchange that can only go up if other currency fails. Silver retains its value well enough, although it does have swings, but it's yours forever, and it's not inordinately expensive to pick up some now and then for both preparedness and long-term savings.

Silver coins from 1964 and earlier don't have the copper in the middle, like the newer coins at left.

Another form of silver that a survivalist might find handy is silver rounds. Silver rounds are coinlike ingots minted by various companies that contain one ounce of .999 silver. There are many different styles—some are broader and thinner and some smaller and thicker, but they're all of equal value. If a survivalist buys one or two a pay period, he'd eventually have a nice cache of real wealth. Most coin shops that aren't exclusively dealing with numismatic items also deal with silver, so look there for supply. Check to ensure that the current prices are listed on the wall or counter.

With copper, you might already possess a hoard. The penny jars, coffee cans, and other containers scattered by the millions throughout American homes contain coins that often exceed their face value. Although prices fluctuate, the copper in pre-1982 pennies far exceeds their face value. (Pennies became copper-plated zinc in 1982.) Generally, if you sort out and save the 1981 and earlier pennies, you've got a stockpile of coins with greater intrinsic value than their denomination, although at this

A few thousand dollars worth of silver (90 percent 1964 and earlier coins and bullion coins), picked up bit by bit over the years and kept in a sturdy, lockable Pelican case.

writing no one is paying extra for them. Still, putting aside all-copper pennies couldn't hurt.

BARTER ITEMS

There are five immediate rules concerning barter items and survivalism:

1. *Don't acquire hordes of barter items when you have other pressing needs unless you anticipate a rush for those items or they're going to be banned.* An example would be normal-capacity gun magazines, which became more valuable in 1994 when anything that held more than 10 rounds was restricted. However, when the ban lifted, they weren't as valuable as necessity or barter items.
2. *Don't barter away items that can harm you.* Some folks acquire additional ammunition in calibers and firearms they don't need with the specific intention to trade them for things they need. Does handing off ammo to people who need it—and might need other things desperately—make much sense? Firearms and ammunition are expensive. Might that money not be better spent filling those anticipated needs in the first place? It's one thing to stockpile ammo and firearms for folks in your group; it's another thing entirely to hand them off to strangers in desperate need during lawless times.
3. *Don't trade off items you are sure to need.* It doesn't make sense to trade food, vitamins, and medicine that you need for something else you might need. You might have extra to give it to those who need help, but that's an entirely different matter. Unless you have a surplus you can't manage—say, after a harvest, or food that is turning—keep it.
4. *Don't barter away a need for a want.* If, after the crisis begins, you find you can do without the item you intend to obtain, but you've been using the items you're about to trade off, seriously reconsider before trading. You might be confusing a want with a need. Excellent examples are trading food for cigarettes or batteries for alcohol.

5. *What might be useless to you might be necessary to them.* Don't consider something worthless and a giveaway just because you don't need that item. If they need it, find out how bad they need it. To trade it off for a pittance is to squander resources as sure as letting meat spoil or cooking oil leak. Your group might consist of all males and older women, so your case of feminine hygiene products might be worthless to you except as bandage material, but it's worth gold to others. Your Dewalt drill might not be much use to you because you don't have a generator to run it, but it could be invaluable to the Andersons, who still have fuel for their generator and are in the midst of frantic repairs and have food to spare.

Consider acquiring items for barter that are inexpensive now but will become invaluable when they're scarce, as well as items that you currently don't need because you have electricity and other means of getting things done. Examples include hygiene products, especially toilet paper and tampons, toothpaste and toothbrushes, bleach, soap, shampoo, laundry soap and washboards, clothespins, lighters, matches, pocketknives, hammers, nails, manual hand drills and bits, socks, fishing hooks, tarps, rope, pencils, paper, permanent markers, duct tape, chem lights, and sewing needles.

There's discussion in the survivalism community regarding the "vice" items: cigarettes and alcohol. Morality and health considerations aside, the impact of stress on alcoholism and nicotine addiction are potent. In many cases, someone in need of a drink or smoke will walk through icy rain at night to get what they need, and if they'll do that, they might trade off something decent to get it. I don't stockpile either for barter, but that's me. Alcohol and cigarettes are too valuable as barter items not to consider putting away, just in case—maybe a bottle or two a year, or a pack a month kept in an airtight container. Even bad liquor might get better with age, and stale cigarettes are better than no cigarettes to hard-core smokers.

UNNECESSARY ESSENTIALS

How can something be an unnecessary essential? Items that fall in this category include things you don't need but are lifesavers or essential for others. These are invaluable items that are too inexpensive not to put away, just in case someone else might desperately need them when they've run out or the item becomes unavailable. Infant and Children's Tylenol comes to mind. Although I don't have young children any longer, I've seen these medicines work wonders. Fevers kill, and we live in wonderful times when we have means of combating symptoms that crippled and killed in the past. Infant and Children's Tylenol are both inexpensive, take little space, and are too valuable to those who need it not to put aside for barter.

Rotate what medicines you can, and discard the stuff that's expired *after* you replace it. In desperation, even expired medication might be worth the risk if suffering is great. One year I combated a nasty flu and possibly walking pneumonia using a stockpile of over-the-counter medications for great relief. I eventually discovered that some were past their expiration date, but they still worked.

Chapter 13

Low-Key Survivalism

Sophisticated survivalists keep very low profiles, and grasping the concept of low-key preparedness is crucial to your success. Although anyone who prepares for hard times is better off than those who don't, a sloppy, loose, and obvious survivalist generates unnecessary difficulties for himself. Simply put, you don't need to tell everyone what you're doing. In most cases they don't care, and you might make it more difficult for yourself, as I'll explain in this chapter. Preparedness is about avoiding problems; it should never be the source of problems.

To illustrate the advantages of being low-key, consider an incident I observed following a tremendous windstorm that hit the Pacific Northwest, which we call the Inaugural Day Storm.

High winds and rains downed power lines throughout the Pacific Northwest on the day President William Jefferson Clinton took office. Although some people had power through some

fluke of electrical distribution, most suffered the cold and darkness without lights, heat, or electrical appliances.

Just before the storm, my father-in-law received a shipment of pressed logs. The pile sat up in front of his house and was visible from the road. People, seeing he possessed a source of heat, came by and asked for a few pieces to get through the night, and being a friendly neighbor, he provided them.

The feeding frenzy began that casually. Soon, others came by and simply took without asking. He even returned one day to see people he didn't know grabbing wood, and someone even brought a wheelbarrow!

Did he get reimbursed? Of course not. Being grateful goes against human nature, and it would be an odd individual who really thanks someone who provided something needed and a unique person who actually settles up. All those people wished to believe they were entitled to his wood—he'd prepared for the winter and he had an alternative source of heat; they hadn't and didn't, and that created resentment.

A lower-key approach for my father-in-law would have been to put the firewood on the backside of a fence or in the garage or shed rather than out front for everyone to see. If it's not visible, other folks are less likely to ask for it and have a harder time just taking it, as going over a barrier reminds them that they're stealing.

This example touches upon another important point with regards to survivalism. If the other people possessed mixed feelings regarding someone having and sharing, how might they feel about someone having a stockpile of what they need and not sharing, or not sharing at the rate they want?

People use a dirty word for those who possess stockpiles of scarce items during times of shortage: they call them hoarders. Like many realities, this is horrifically unfair, but unfair doesn't mean it doesn't happen. If people know you have ample supplies of scarce goods in times of shortage, they'll view you as a threat and, eventually, as a resource to exploit. It doesn't matter to them that you paid attention to current events, anticipated future shortages, and bought other items during times of plenty, just as they had the same opportunity but didn't. If they merely know someone who has something that they need, they will consider it part theirs.

There's a shift in people's thinking as essential items become scarce. They believe that we—the "hoarders"—created the shortage, and the suffering is therefore our fault, and that justifies their envy and subsequent actions. If someone can establish such a link between the crisis and you, no matter how tenuous, you have a problem.

Another aspect of human nature also kicks in—people become angrier with someone who is right when they're wrong than they do at someone who is wrong when they're right. Toss in hunger pangs, crying children, and fear, and resentment becomes rage.

So, if you have a limited resource that's desperately needed, your popularity plummets as your security concerns erupt. If you openly prepared well in advance, you will be remembered. But there are basic precautions you can take to stay low-key and avoid these problems in the first place.

DON'T BLAB TO ACQUAINTANCES

If you tell your neighbors and coworkers that you're stocking up for hard times, they might sip their coffee or beer as they raise an eyebrow and exchange glances. A few might noncommittally ask you to explain your preparations, and they will mentally file that information, but eventually someone will politely move the conversation to another topic. One or two might share your concern, and if you get into a discussion right there, you and that person become "one of those guys" to the others.

However, if circumstances dramatically change, and it's generally known that you have those 30 sacks of rice, 60 cases of MREs, and 500 gallons of water in your garage, you've got a problem not only with everyone who knows but also everyone they tell. Because people *will* talk.

When hunger seizes people, food becomes an obsession, and folks search memories as well as cupboards for relief. In addition to Bob and Sarah at work who heard that you were the oddball who stockpiled food, Bob's brother-in-law Rick, Sarah's brother Karl, and Allan, who he goes fishing with, suddenly remember you, too. Now you're one of them, those people still possessing resources. Equally as bad for you, you become, in their minds, *one of us*—in other words, they'll feel they're entitled to a chunk of what you have just because they know you.

So be very careful about advertising your preparations beyond family, long-term friends, and perhaps church members if preparedness is part of the shared belief of your congregation, because everyone who is in the loop will talk, and a widening circle of people will know that you have what they need in a crisis. When things get tight, they might show up knocking at, or worse, kicking in your front door.

This includes fellow survivalists. Think about it—by letting individuals who have identified themselves as being willing to do whatever it takes to make it in an emergency get to know you, you are also allowing them to size you up, check out your defenses, assess your ideas, and calculate your resources! Survivalists aren't the most passive people and encompass a wide range of individual beliefs and values. The most hard-core of the bunch view everything and everyone as competition, resources, obstacles, and/or irrelevant. By sharing what you're doing, you are no longer irrelevant to them. Don't invite someone into your life who has the mind-set and motivation to take what they want by force.

Consider a survivalist I once knew whom I'll call the Nut Job. The man actually drew up lists of people along with what they had that he wanted. He'd listen in on gun deals and write down, for example, "Anderson, .270 Browning A Bolt with Leupold scope, Harris Bipod, has gun safe. Paid cash," along with notes on where and when people worked and their routes to and from work and home. He'd kept it all on hand in a notebook, and he'd study it. He was a scary individual.

Low-key survivalism is why Andy James is actually a pen name. My next-door neighbors know nothing about my freeze-dried food, firearms, ammunition, and equipment. My best friend doesn't know everything I possess, nor do any of my relatives. I'll help them out in crisis, and I'll help others, but at my own time and in my own manner. Right now it doesn't need to come up.

AVOID OFFICIAL SCRUTINY

In the 1980s the press successfully, if inaccurately, tied survivalism to the actions of militant antigovernment groups,

racists, conspiracy nuts, and other extremists. In many circles, survivalist, Klan member, militia member, neo-Nazi, and gun owner are loosely linked terms, and they are interchangeable to some people!

So you might not realize that your coworker Mark considers all survivalists to be antigovernment extremists, or that Barb across the street is a kook who reports everything she sees or imagines to the feds. She might be considered a nut at the local FBI field office . . . until the day they get a memo to look for suspicious people in the area who are stockpiling. Suddenly, her three dismissed calls regarding a homeowner with shelves full of military ammo cans in his garage become a priority. Someone in the FBI office or sheriff's department starts to believe that they ought to check into it, just to cover their rears, because of an incident where a nosy neighbor reported on domestic terrorists involved in another case, and the lack of response is part of a pending lawsuit.

Even if you don't become the object of law-enforcement snooping, your cache of rice, dried beans, fuel, or whatever will become significant if it is discovered by other government entities. FEMA might decide to seize your materials both to redistribute and to control them, if they experience enough need and if you have enough to consider.

It's not just FEMA that could be driven to act. State or local authorities may have a drive to acquire resources in a crisis that is even higher than federal bureaucrats. This could occur even if you intend to share your resources, as many of us do. At the time of the seizure, you might be given a voucher at whatever price they determine is adequate—and if that material is something like fuel in your underground tank, they're not going to pay the inflated post-disaster prices. If you get reimbursed at all, it will be after weeks, months, maybe years of standing in line, having calls ignored, and mail vanish.

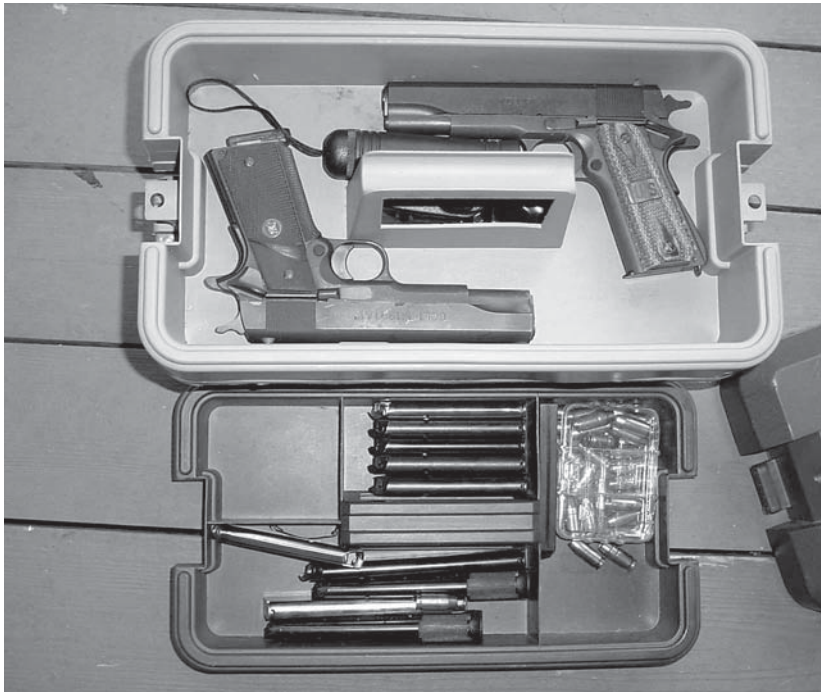
You might wish and plan to help others, again at your pace and in *your* manner, but that's taken out of *your* hands if the authorities home in on your supplies. You're a known, readily available solution to someone else's problem, a very bad and pressing problem, which isn't a good way to be. Don't become the perceived solution to everyone else's problem. Don't be seen as a resource.

DON'T DISPLAY YOUR SURVIVALIST LIFESTYLE

If you're driving a hand-painted camo Ford Bronco with bumper stickers proclaiming "Don't Tread on Me," and you wear BDUs daily even though you're not in the military, people *will* keep a wary eye on you. Those same people will be concerned when you have a delivery truck drop off a pallet worth of ammo or beans, grains, and rice in nitrogen-sealed 5-gallon pails (or a pallet worth of *anything*, for that matter). In that context, "What is he preparing for?" isn't an innocent, harmless question; it's often tinged with fear. It might start as speculative gossip and casual comments now, but it becomes critical information to the wrong people later. If things go downhill, they're going to tell others that they know you have a year's supply of freeze-dried food or an arsenal of guns. At that point, someone will make a phone call.

Your goal is to *not* present a threat to these people. You want to be seen as Bob, the nice fellow down the street who is always doing projects or has money-making schemes, who occasionally has something large dropped off at the house. You don't want to be Butch, the camo-wearing "gun nut" who

An example of low-key survivalism. This toolbox looks harmless, could be carried anywhere.



But what's inside? Two inexpensive .45s: a Colt M1991A1 and a Springfield M1911A1. Ammo, spare magazines, and flashlights underneath.

boasts about having enough food and ammo to hold the cops at bay for a month. Even a load of drywall delivered to his home (more likely a "compound" in the neighbors' eyes) might be seen as somehow sinister.

PAY IN CASH

Paying cash for survival supplies is a good means of remaining low-key, if not used in huge amounts. It generates no records, no phone numbers, no credit card slips, and no addresses linking you to the purchase. Yep, some guy buys a lot of rice and beans, but he's not worth remembering because he always pays cash, so he doesn't fall in with those SOBs who write bad checks.

GUNS AND LOW-PROFILE PREPAREDNESS

Almost all survivalists have guns, as they are prepared for any contingency, but it's never a good idea to advertise your personal possession of firearms. It not only sets you up as a target for burglary if word of your wonderful gun collection reaches the wrong ears, but it will also scare the soccer moms and dads in your child's play group. Your guns are nobody's business but your own.

Many legitimate gun buyers are concerned about government record keeping. They fear that the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco, and Explosives (ATF) records on our gun purchases could be used to seize firearms if there is a dramatic shift in how things operate. This is a bona fide concern to many, as there are historical examples where registration led to confiscation in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, England, and Australia, to name a few. To address this problem legally, many gun owners only buy used firearms in private sales so there isn't a record of the transaction.

But what if you want a new firearm or that nice used gun from a dealer? If you attempt to go to a gun shop or any FFL (Federal Firearms License) dealer and try to buy a gun "off the books," you're not only asking for trouble but also throwing up a high profile, totally defeating your purpose of being low profile by having no paper trail. Having someone else buy the gun for you is illegal as well. Nor is it so critical for your preparedness that you have an illegal (in your area) firearm, whether it's due to inane standards like those in California or local restrictions on owning a full-automatic weapon. All survivalists take hits when criminals who hold some survivalist views get nailed for firearm violations.

The ATF doesn't play (see Waco), and you shouldn't either when it comes to firearms.

COVER UP PAST INDISCRETIONS

What if it's, "I can't be low-key; they already know me"? In that case, don't throw up a higher profile, and don't provide continual reminders. If you've made mistakes in the past and told others about your survivalist views, shrug and change the topic the next time it comes up, as if you've moved on from that paranoid foolishness. Act as if you've just gotten into NASCAR or fishing or something. You don't want such phrases as "all that end-of-the-world crap" to come up naturally when they refer to you.

By being a low-key survivalist, you won't be seen as a hoarder, you won't present a threat to anyone, and no one will consider you a resource in bad times—unless you wish to resource them.

Chapter 14

Personal Tests and Activities

It's possible to get your family interested in survivalism without forcing the notion on them, if simply pointing out the problems revealed by the latest disaster hasn't done it for you. It's also fun and worthwhile to hone your own skills. Here are a handful of activities to help you accomplish both.

THREE DAYS ON YOUR SURVIVAL DIET

A simple test of your preparedness is to exist for three days on your survival larder. You can use nothing else for food or supplies; use only your alternative means of heating and preparing food, such as mixing by hand, heating without your stove, oven, or microwave; and attempt to clean flatware and utensils with minimal water. By doing this, you'll not only determine whether you need to add variety to your cache, but you'll also determine your actual use rate. Record your results and start looking for more workable menu

options when problems crop up. (A side benefit of this test is that it helps you rotate out old supplies.)

This one isn't a fun family activity; it's a shakedown of your overall plan. This test almost instantly settled my personal debate on disposable utensils, cups, and plates. Now I know I'll use them up and eat directly from cans before I even think of washing dishes with limited water. I also stopped settling on long-term dry-storage items only and went with a larger variety for my food choices, and I bought two different light, gas-burning stoves.

BACKYARD CAMPING

By simply camping in your backyard three days during each season, you can test your gear and realize any improvements you need to make before a real crisis occurs. Most can get through the first two nights, but it's facing the third night that gets you thinking about improving what you have.

You might be shocked at what you discover. Summers, especially nights, are often damp and chilly in my location, and there's no opportunity to dry off. Even as a long-term resident, I am always astonished at how cold this area can be in the early morning hours in one location, while at the same time just a few miles away, it's relatively mild. People wake up and leave for work in the morning, totally unaware of how cold, miserable, and long the nights would be without insulated, heated homes.

To make this test worthwhile, between the second and third night get whatever items you need to improve the situation and evaluate them in use. The advantages of field testing at home is you find out quickly what doesn't work, and you have the option of fixing it right then, preventing you from discovering gaps in your planning and preparation during the real thing. Given the experience of crapping in a bag and figuring out how to get rid of it without plumbing causes you to do some serious thinking!

$10 SHOPPING SPREES

Taking just $10, see how efficiently you can shop for durable, storable rations, and how many healthy or semi-healthy calories you can acquire for that nominal amount. You might find you

can pick up what is normally $15 to $25 of shelf-stable food and other items for the 10 bucks during "Dollar Days" type sales.

Once you've become good at acquiring inexpensive, storable food, move toward other gear. Sometimes I challenge my sons to find the most useful objects for survival at Wal-Mart, the Dollar Tree, or Target. Often I'm amazed by what they can come up with. Sometimes the survival use they have in mind for the object isn't the intended use; other times it is. Examples of items they've found include hatchets, a variety of knives, bungee cords, ponchos, and tarps.

The same exercise can be done at Costco or Sam's with $50. It will train you to really seek out the bargains at these vast warehouses.

DOLLAR STORE SHOPPING

My younger son understands survivalism, and periodically I give him some money and tell him to go into our local Dollar Tree and buy the most useful items he can think of for survivalism. Being a smart teenager, he takes his time, thinks about it, and he surprises me. An example of what he came up with was Diamond white-tip matches, which aren't a surprise, but he coupled them with a plastic pill cutter. He'd use the pill cutter to safely separate the white heads from the strike-anywhere matches if they were needed for other purposes, such as making primer caps for my old black powder rifle. For giveaways or barter, he picked up some plastic clamshell shoeboxes and tossed in bags of beans, rice, fruit cocktail, matches, and Vienna franks, all for a buck apiece. Other things he's come home with include full-tang knives, hatchets, ponchos, survival blankets, hammers, tools, bungee cords, tarps, plastic containers, Cordura-type haversacks, goggles, and folding knives, all useful items, all available at the dollar stores.

SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

Take a common, disposable, or limited-use object and attempt to make the most useful survival item with it. Start off simple and work your way up—maybe a funnel, or a trap for minnows, wasps, or squirrels, out of 2-liter soda bottles. One

useful item I made started with a pre-safety-features box fan with metal blades that was likely 30 or more years old, but unused. I removed the blades and made simple tools out of them, then took the motor, reversed it in the box so it would be higher, cut a surface for the box edge to make a work surface, and produced an edge sander out of an overpowered, unsafe fan I'd never use in the house with small children about.

Items you might consider for experimentation include:

- Dented or cracked trash cans, metal or plastic
- Old leather belts
- Tin cans
- Plastic plates and cups
- Old computer CPUs
- Tires
- Clothing
- Spike-type nails
- Wire hangers

Making something out of nothing can cost nothing or get expensive, depending on one's imagination. With imagination and materials, it's impossible to be bored.

KNAPPING GLASS

On my long list of things to do someday is learning to knap glass (i.e., shape it by striking it). An Indian told me that he missed the glass 7Up bottles because they were so handy for this. His grandfather used to knap the thick bottoms of the green bottles into arrowheads and hang them with chicken feathers and beads and sell them for "big money to foolish tourists" as authentic, Indian-made curios. Apparently they were beautiful hung from the mirror and catching the sun.

Knapping glass, he informed me, is quicker and easier in some ways than knapping obsidian, although breaking the material the wrong way happens more frequently. He said that it's semi-practical to use glass arrowheads even if they shatter because they did the job well enough for smaller game. His advice? "Don't miss."

MAKING A KNIFE

To this day, one of my favorite knives was one I made out of shelf bracket when I was 10 or 11 years old. I made it with a vise, hacksaw, and hand file one afternoon, and it's endured much use serving as everything from a spear point to a belt knife. It was my second fixed-blade knife and my first one with a blade longer than 6 inches. Over the years the grip has been wrapped with a plaid bathrobe belt, rope, and garden hose, and it's been sheathed in cardboard, wood, and leather.

Years later as a teen, I read an article about knife making and realized I didn't know anything about metal selection and hardness scales, tempering, forging, and proper sharpening, and I put my up-to-then trusty knife aside, thinking it was an embarrassment and evidence of my ignorance. What I didn't realize then was that I had come up with a full-tang knife that served me through all sorts of abuse without failing, including prying, throwing, chopping, and cutting, requiring only some sharpening now and then.

Making an improvised knife only with hand tools out of an existing length of steel, including making proper scales and a scabbard, is a good project for a kid or an adult. It's a confidence builder. Just don't read any damn knife-making magazines or books or suddenly you might not be able to do it.

KEY RING KIT

One hobby that many outdoorsmen and survivalists seem to enjoy is assembling survival kits of various types in different containers. Putting a few dollars into assembling a key-ring-size kit isn't a waste of money, and it's only a loss if you lose it. If you hit hardware and sporting good stores, you can find several items on sale from time to time that have good utility, like small knives, compasses, and even metal mirrors. Look especially around the cash registers, where you'll find bins and displays for these sorts of small impulse buys.

Moving up from there, it's interesting to see what handy items you can shove into an Altoids tin. Examples include signal mirrors, fishing line and hook, P-38 can openers, small knives, bouillon cubes, matches and tinder, and other small items.

Key chain kit includes collapsible mini-tool, LED, whistle for signaling, small lock blade, magnesium fire starter, and P-38 for opening cans, using as a screwdriver, and striking the fire starter.

LARGER KIT ASSEMBLING

Like the key chain or Altoids tin kit, a larger survival kit consists of several handy items placed into a portable box, canister, or bag, designed to help someone through rough times. They might include an inexpensive or expensive compass, sewing kit, fishing gear, pocket knife, bandages, matches, fire starter, pen, Mylar survival blanket, and so on. It's amusing, but often survivalists find a neat container and start seeing what they can cram into it rather than write out a list and find a container to fit it all! Interestingly, some of the most useful kits are assembled this way, because then careful consideration is needed in selecting what items and which of each type fit best. This keeps the kits small and therefore more likely to be carried in a pack pouch or left in a glove compartment, gym bag, or other commonly accessed location.

A good kit to start with is a bug-out bag (BOB). A BOB is intended to keep you alive when mobile for about three or four days, and it'll contain items similar to those you'd need for backpacking and camping for the same duration. Seasonal considerations are important, but most BOBs contain a change of

You can start a basic survival tool kit with what's on hand and upgrade it later, or call it good enough. Here is a pair of needle-nose pliers, an inexpensive flashlight, and a common sheath knife.

clothing, extra socks, rain gear, food, water, sleeping bag, ground cloth and tent, flashlight, and tools. Some urban BOBs are lighter and more oriented toward having a roof over one's head with hooded sweatshirt, food, water, change, pepper spray, and flashlight. Bug-out bags can be kept in the trunk or back of your bug-out vehicle (most often the one you use daily) or in an easy-to-reach place in the home.

Upper end for shoestring survivalism: Gerber multi-tool, SureFire light, and SOG knife.

Conclusion

What if Nothing Happens?

What if nothing happens? Then thank God, Yahweh, Jehovah, Allah, the Fates, Karma, or whomever or whatever you hold sacred for your good fortune. If a significant disruption of goods and services doesn't occur in your lifetime, you needn't be disappointed! Being upset that you didn't need emergency rations and a first-aid kit is like complaining that you never had a chance to test your car's airbags.

So consider yourself a fortunate and perhaps unique person if you've gone through life and never faced a serious calamity, shortage, or natural disaster. If that's not enough solace, know that your survivalism wasn't wasted. You enjoyed reassurance and a few more restful nights while others worried, and there were probably times when you avoided being among the panicked crowds shopping before the big storm. During the resulting blackout, you shrugged and lit your Coleman

lantern, broke chem lights, or kicked on the generator and watched the ball game.

But there are other ways in which you benefited. You benefited every time you didn't rush out and get something because you possessed backups and stockpiles. You had something to dip into when the money went short or you merely didn't feel like going to the store. No one went hungry. You never ran out of toilet paper when you really, really needed it (that in itself is worth engaging in preparedness), and you didn't make a late-night trip to the drugstore in bad weather because someone got a sore throat. (You needed to rotate the over-the-counter meds anyway.)

Shoestring survivalism also benefits you if you face unemployment or otherwise lean times. By practicing shoestring survivalism, you have food on hand, eliminating one major expense while finding another job or scraping by until the next paycheck. You developed thrift, made contacts, and found sources that will help you during periods with a tighter budget than you're used to.

Your family might not even realize it meant that they didn't worry as much as they might have, because they knew you were prepared. You've provided some relief from the quiet desperation of the unready. If you prepare now and follow shoestring survivalism, well, you didn't hurt yourself by tying up too much money when you needed it for something else. Preparedness is just another form of insurance that you can eat, or wear, or stop the bleeding with, or see by . . .

And it only costs a few bucks a month.

Although this is the conclusion of *Shoestring Survivalism,* the practice of preparedness doesn't end. It's a practice that needs to be fluid and modified as we learn more, although the basics remain the same:

1. Learn about the threats and impacts.
2. Determine needs and fill them.
3. Come up with alternatives.
4. Plan accordingly and act.

Lessons learned too quickly become assumptions, and some practices become complacencies, and assumptions and complacency get people killed. One old, odd aspect of survivalism for many—the desire to get off the grid, shun society, and become

isolated and "do your own thing"—can ensure that a survivalist becomes ignorant of new threats and changing circumstances. The bitter irony is that to tie oneself too closely to survivalism entails significant risks that negate so much effort elsewhere. Survivalism is about balance and awareness. Awareness is essential to survivalism. *Awareness is preparedness.*

I hope your preparations become unnecessary and your fears remain theoretical, but if that's not the case, you're no victim, and there's no need to say "good luck" because we survivalists don't trust it.

Enjoy each and every day, take care of those you love, and that ought to motivate you in your shoestring survivalism.

"Experiencing post trauma means you survived it. Quit whining."
—Shig Takada

Appendix
Bags and Kits

Although the items in your home, car, pocket, and bug-out bag necessarily will vary due to factors like location, climate, emergency type, and budget, I have provided some basic lists here. One thing to note is that they are preparedness kits as opposed to survival kits, but they can readily be expanded to survival kits with additions like signal mirrors, fishing line, and fishing hooks. Consider these lists the starting point to create your own bags and lists.

Documents you should have in a secure, waterproof container at home (and copies kept at a secure off-site location):

- ❑ Mortgage/lease agreement
- ❑ Power of attorney
- ❑ Marriage certificate
- ❑ Birth certificates
- ❑ Diplomas and certifications
- ❑ Military discharge and other documents

- ❑ Divorce decree
- ❑ Prenuptial agreement
- ❑ Will
- ❑ Contracts
- ❑ Insurance
- ❑ Copies of power, water, sewage, phone, and cable bills
- ❑ Credit card information, especially the toll-free and account numbers
- ❑ Contact phone numbers for outside of the area
- ❑ Employer and school phone numbers

Things to have at home, either in place or know where they are as a bare minimum:

- ❑ Essential document packet (in a fire-resistant container is better)
- ❑ Money, as much as you can comfortably squirrel away for preparedness, in $20s, $5s, and $1s
- ❑ Food, enough for 30 days per person (not just 72 hours)
- ❑ Water, 5 gallons per person as a minimum, plus empty containers and one or more means to make potable water (e.g., water filters)
- ❑ Enough prescription medication to last a week at all times (a month if possible)
- ❑ Quality first-aid kit
- ❑ Matches and lighters
- ❑ Firearm with ammunition
- ❑ Fire extinguishers
- ❑ Smoke detectors, battery operated
- ❑ Flashlights, LED lights, and chem lights (glow sticks)
- ❑ Battery-operated radios with batteries (crank and battery-operated is better)
- ❑ Wind-up or battery-operated clock
- ❑ Sanitation items as applicable—toilet paper, tampons, diapers, wipes, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc. (more than you think you'd need for a month)
- ❑ Heavy blankets (wool if possible)
- ❑ Work clothing and boots
- ❑ Sweaters or sweatshirts and long underwear
- ❑ Tarps and plastic sheeting (or plywood in hurricane areas)
- ❑ Ropes

- ❑ Duct tape
- ❑ 550 cord
- ❑ Toolbox with standard items
- ❑ Staple gun (or nail gun)
- ❑ Wrench to shut off gas
- ❑ Water shutoff tool
- ❑ Extraction kit—saws, various length pry bars, jack, axe, etc.
- ❑ If you can afford them, hand-held two-way radios
- ❑ If you can afford it, a generator

Car kit:

- ❑ Owner's manual
- ❑ Road guide, local maps, and/or GPS system
- ❑ Quality first-aid kit
- ❑ Hand sanitizer
- ❑ Firearm and ammunition
- ❑ Folding knives
- ❑ Backpack or bag
- ❑ Red chem lights or flares
- ❑ Flashlight and batteries or LED light
- ❑ Matches and lighters
- ❑ Jumper cables
- ❑ Extra fluids (antifreeze, oil, wiper, etc.)
- ❑ Several cans of Fix-a-Flat.
- ❑ Toolbox with standard mechanic items—socket set, screwdrivers, wrench, pliers, hacksaw with spare blades, etc.
- ❑ Extra fuses
- ❑ Work gloves
- ❑ Walking shoes or hiking boots
- ❑ Spare set of clothing
- ❑ Poncho or raingear
- ❑ Bottled water
- ❑ Canned or other shelf-stable food
- ❑ Sanitation items as applicable—toilet paper, tampons, diapers, wipes, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.
- ❑ Blankets and space blankets
- ❑ Folding shovel
- ❑ Tire chains or cables
- ❑ Tow rope or chain
- ❑ Plastic sheeting

- ❑ Duct tape
- ❑ Electrical tape

Bug-out bag:

- ❑ Backpack, shoulder bag, or shoulder strap-equipped duffle bag
- ❑ First-aid kit
- ❑ Flashlight with batteries or LED light
- ❑ Small radio with batteries or small, hand-cranked radio
- ❑ Chem lights
- ❑ Matches and lighter
- ❑ Multitool
- ❑ 100 mph tape, short roll
- ❑ 550 cord bundle
- ❑ Waterproof liner and Ziplock bags
- ❑ Three pair socks
- ❑ Work gloves, with weather protection
- ❑ Shell jacket and hooded sweatshirt (adjust to climate)
- ❑ Raingear
- ❑ Walking shoes or hiking boots
- ❑ Food such as energy bars, MREs, etc.
- ❑ Bottled water and canteens
- ❑ Sanitation items as applicable—toilet paper, tampons, diapers, wipes, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.
- ❑ Hand sanitizer
- ❑ Sleeping bag
- ❑ Tarp, ponchos, or tent
- ❑ Space blankets
- ❑ Folding shovel
- ❑ Kukri or tomahawk
- ❑ Folding knives
- ❑ Firearm—locale determines rifle or sidearm
- ❑ Ammunition
- ❑ Rope

Daily carry items that might be helpful:

- ❑ Sidearm with holster
- ❑ Magazine pouch with one or two spare magazines
- ❑ Pocket knife
- ❑ Multitool

- ❑ LED light
- ❑ $100—four $20s, three $5s, five $1s
- ❑ Pocket change
- ❑ Cell phone
- ❑ Bandana or handkerchief
- ❑ Sterile latex or non-latex gloves